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Marxism Today

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FOCUS

Zimbabwe

By the time the Tories came to power on May 3, 1979, there was little doubt that they intended to accord recognition to the Muzorewa regime. The Conservative Party Manifesto 1979 had stated that 'If the Six Principles . . . are fully satisfied following the present Rhodesian Election, the next government will have the duty to return Rhodesia to a state of legality, move to lift sanctions, and do its utmost to ensure that the new independent state gains international recognition.' The basis of the Conservatives' support of the Salisbury regime was that they saw it as the embodiment of the fight against communism in Zimbabwe. Their oft-stated wish to roll back socialism in Britain thus found expression in supporting the internal settlement against the Patriotic Front. Just before she became prime minister, Margaret Thatcher said, 'The problem isn't between whether you should have a white or black government, it's who shall be the black government.'[1]

However, the reasoning on which the Tories based their open espousal of the Salisbury regime eventually began to crumble. They discovered that the United Nations and the international community was convinced that the April elections which had brought the Muzorewa regime into being were a farce. In black Africa, not a single country was willing to accord recognition to the state of Zimbabwe-Rhodesia. Also the Tory insistence on the six principles was not fulfilled as the African majority had not been given the same opportunity as had been given the whites to say whether or not the constitution was acceptable to them. In America, the Carter administration, despite the vote in the Senate supporting removal of Rhodesian sanctions, did not share the Tories' enthusiasm for the Muzorewa regime and was reported to be shocked on hearing Thatcher's statement in Australia regarding the lifting of Rhodesian sanctions.[2] The Americans still maintained faith in the type of diplomacy represented by the Anglo-American plan. That plan's envisaged economic aid to the future state of Zimbabwe held out the prospect of a more durable western influence in the form of the priorities which the new state would be forced to adopt to ensure continued receipt of that aid.

As time went on, cracks began to appear in the internal settlement structure as the participants started bickering among themselves and Bishop Muzorewa proved unable to stop the escalating war. Reverend Ndabaningi Sithole, who had alleged that the April elections were grossly irregular, was persuaded to end his boycott of government and parliament only after a trip to London. James Chikerema, once Muzorewa's first vice-president in the UANC, parted company with the Bishop and formed his own political party. This opposition and the war served to indicate that there was no basis for arguing in favour of the Salisbury regime as a viable entity.

During the Summit Conference of the Organisation of African Unity in Monrovia last July, African states without exception gave their support to the Patriotic Front and condemned the Muzorewa regime in no uncertain terms. The Americans felt somewhat vindicated in seeing the Tory government being forced to take serious account of this stance of the African community. The cost of not doing so had been demonstrated by the Nigerians who had unleashed a series of measures very damaging to British economic interests culminating in the nationalisation of British Petroleum on the eve of the Commonwealth Summit Conference in Lusaka held recently.

The first indication that the Tories were climbing down came in the form of their endorsement of the American demand that there be changes in the constitution of Zimbabwe-Rhodesia and a new referendum. The *Sunday Express* of July 29, 1979, saw this as a 'shattering change' in the Tory attitude and asked, 'Isn't it fantastic that a Tory government should act in this way?'

Thus by the time of the Commonwealth Summit last August, various factors had succeeded in softening the attitude of the Tories on Zimbabwe, but they had one card which they hoped they could still play on reaching Lusaka. They hoped that the militancy of the African states, such as had been demonstrated by the hard-line OAU resolution on Zimbabwe, if repeated in Lusaka, might supply the Tories with a justification for posing the recognition of Zimbabwe-Rhodesia as a moderate and realistic alternative. The frontline states of Angola, Botswana, Mozambique, Tanzania and Zambia were fully aware of this. On the eve of the summit, they held an emergency meeting at which it appears that calm but firm diplomacy was decided on as a common strategy against the Thatcher government.

So the Tories were effectively forced to change their plans on Zimbabwe, but the question is, to what? The nature of that change was expressed by Lord Carrington, the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary, when he met a Muzorewa delegation in London towards the end of July. He told them that 'Britain's priorities were to keep the Commonwealth united, to preserve good relations with America and Europe, and to try to ensure the future survival of Zimbabwe-Rhodesia.' But these are precisely the objectives of the Foreign Office which is used to a more calculated defence of British interests abroad and which consequently has favoured the Anglo-American kind of approach. The Tories were thus made to realise that the continuance of imperialist interests in Zimbabwe demanded a common strategy on the part of the imperialists.

The fact that the Tory change of attitude was a victory for the Foreign Office was perhaps more evident after the Lusaka summit than at any other time. The Commonwealth communique released after the deliberations made no mention of the Patriotic Front, thus implicitly placing it on a par with the Muzorewa regime and totally contradicting the OAU resolution to which the African states attending the Commonwealth

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conference had previously contributed. That resolution recognised the Patriotic Front as 'the sole, legitimate and authentic representative of the people of Zimbabwe.' Thus with the influence of the Foreign Office restored, we can expect a more vigorous but subtle support of the Salisbury regime as used to happen during the heyday of the Anglo-American plan.

[1] *Time* (Europe), May 14, 1979, p. 13.

[2] *The Observer*, July 9, 1979; *Morning Star*, July 2, 1979.

[3] *Sunday Express*, July 29, 1979.

Monetarism - does the City like it?

Are the City and big business circles giving their unqualified support to the drastic monetarist policies of the Tory government? There are already signs of doubts in some quarters.

The outlook for the British is depressing; all the main forecasting institutions, including the treasury, expect that national output will decline next year, or at best stagnate, and unemployment will rise. Investment in manufacturing industry, which has already ceased rising, is expected to fall. The Confederation of British Industry in its quarterly survey published at the end of July, forecast that company profits will fall this year and will drop even lower next year—in a situation where the profitability of manufacturing industry has been at a lower level in the 1970s than ever before and is lower than in the other main capitalist countries. In the words of the Chancellor of the Exchequer, the economic prospect is 'almost frighteningly bad'.

This is in part the result of a slowdown in the expansion of world trade. But it will also be a consequence of the policy of deflation which the Government is pursuing with fanatical zeal. As Wynne Godley, director of the Department of Applied Economics at Cambridge, wrote in the *Observer* of August 26: 'My belief is that the present policies will drive the economy into the worst recession since the 1930s, with no presumption that spontaneous recovery will occur at any stage'.

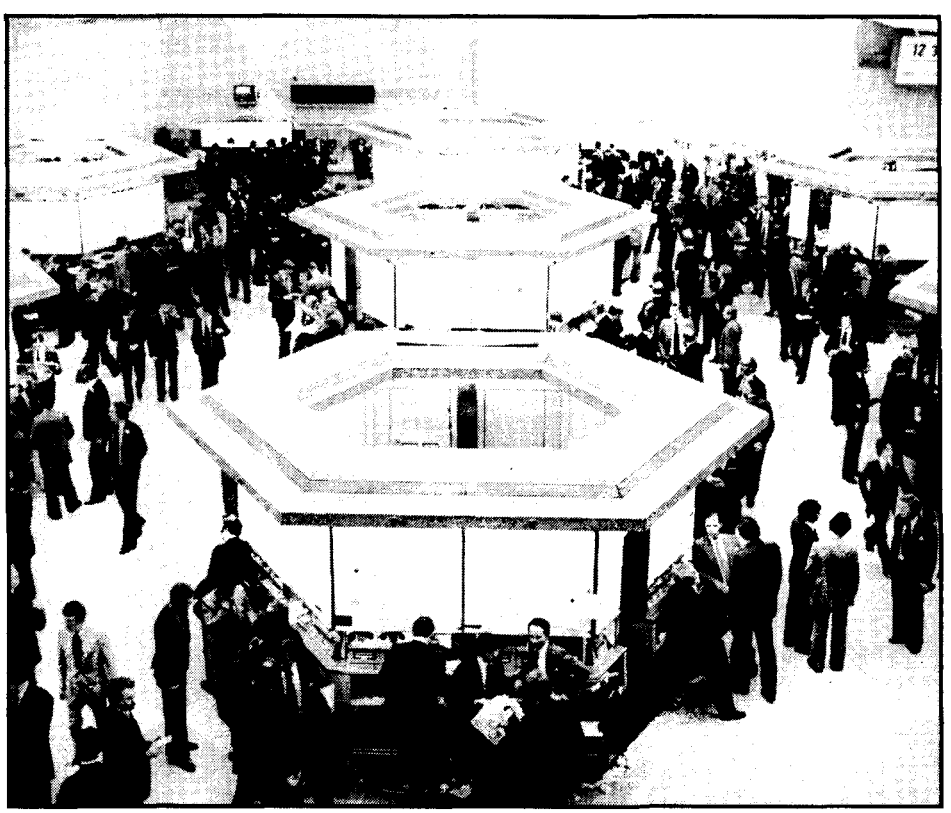
Naturally the government does not share this view. It believes that the fierce deflation will undermine the bargaining power of trade unions, raise the share of profits in net output at the expense of wages, and squeeze inflation out of the system, laying the basis for a great upsurge in output, investment and productivity. But in the City there is evidently some anxiety, expressed for example by a *Financial Times* leader on August 7: 'Faith in the Government's economic policy must be built on the hope that a currency and monetary squeeze will have its impact on inflation before it destroys the profitability of large parts of Britain's manufacturing industry. This is a gamble and the stakes are higher than the Government would wish . . . '. And Sir Arthur Knight, chairman of Courtauld's, said at its annual meeting on July 18 that the high exchange rate of the pound had had a drastic effect on export margins, and unless positive action was taken to reduce the rate, the result could be 'long lasting and cause us to rethink our strategies'. He meant, presumably, that the company's plan for investment at home would have to be revised downwards.

A week before Sir Keith Joseph announced on July 17 that government regional aid to industry would be cut by nearly 40 per cent by 1982-3, the CBI sent him a memorandum urging caution in reducing regional aid during an economic recession before a reasonable level of profitability was achieved. On the day of Sir Keith's announcement, Sir John Methuen, CBI's director general, publicly repeated this warning in the midst of what the *Financial Times* described as 'a general tenor or criticism voiced by industry'.

However, when the CBI council met a few days later, its members evidently expressed their concern at the unduly critical nature of Sir John's remarks, and he said after the meeting that his members thought the Government 'had managed pretty well' and had met many of the points they had asked for. And when the CBI's gloomy forecast (quoted above) was published, Sir Ray Pennock, chairman of its economic committee and deputy chairman of ICI, said that the forecast did not mean that industry had lost confidence in the Government, but it would like a cut in interest rates when the Government considered it right to do so (*Financial Times* 1/8/79). Evidently the CBI is torn between its loyalty to the Government and its serious concern at the prospect of falling demand and profits.

It is also significant that some of the most dedicated monetarists have shown signs of nervousness at the drastic character of government policies. Gordon Pepper, partner in the stockbrokers Greenwell and Co and a leading commentator on monetary matters, wrote in the *Observer* on August 12 that he feared the money supply was rising too slowly for comfort; the economy should be given time to react to changes in monetary policy, and 'if it is forced to react too abruptly, it will suffer quite unnecessary disruption'. Mr Sam Brittan, the arch-monetarist contributor to the *Financial Times*, has expressed his fears that government policy may be too rigid and inflexible.

Disillusion with the failure of Keynesian policies of demand management combined with incomes policy has resulted in a reaction in favour of an extreme form of monetarism, disengagement and reliance on market forces. As the disastrous consequences become apparent, the ground is perhaps being prepared when the third course, the alternative economic strategy of the labour movement could, if it can be developed in the right way, command widespread support.



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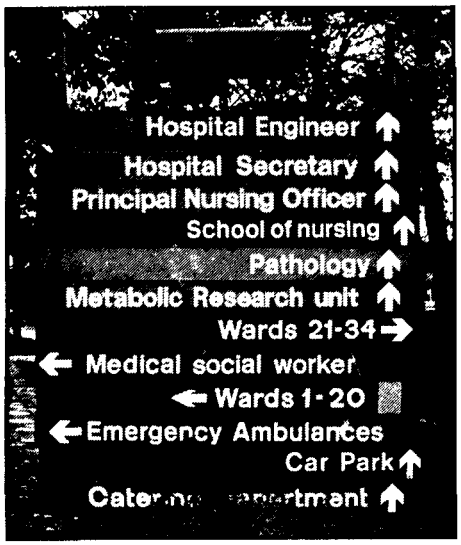

NHS Cuts

Hopeful cuts-watchers may dream of an action replay of the Clay Cross saga, this time inside the national health service, initiated by the spectacular disobedience of Lambeth, Southwark and Lewisham Area Health Authority[1] when faced by government demands for economy measures. If one metropolitan AHA can do it, even enrolling the conservative but powerful teaching hospitals, why not the provincial and less-well endowed Areas and Regions? The answer that punctures the dream is this: local government is not tightly and hierarchically organised on business-management lines; the national health service is. The relationship between central and local government allowed the Clay Cross councillors to resist central directives and survive for a period of time before being removed from their posts. With local support they were able to continue their campaign, through a new council, for longer. Whatever the reasons for their eventual defeat, they were able as a single detachment to fight a prolonged rearguard action against damaging legislation. The members of the Area Health Authority in Lambeth are in the opposite position. They have been removed from their posts 'at a stroke' without recourse to the cumbersome and treacherous legal procedures that democracy imposes upon the state. They have been replaced, instantly, by government supporters who will carry out the economy measures as prescribed. Opposition at lower administrative levels will have to face the prospect of the same fate—dismissal and replacement. For the individuals serving in a voluntary capacity on Area and Regional Health Authorities such dismissal is a political issue; for their salaried subordinates at the executive end of the whole apparatus, it is a matter of livelihood. Opposition from trade unions or the local population may be less compromised, and more likely to influence judgements within the AHAs and RHAs, but their main effect will be to divert the cuts towards the weakest adjacent sectors. In the administration of the NHS, if nowhere else, the state plays a corporate game.

Perhaps the most important feature of the Lambeth AHA affair is the unusual set of political relationships that allowed an appointed body (the AHA) to defy the Government. A coalition of the medical profession, Labour councillors and assorted other appointed functionaries is not the commonest kind of pressure group encountered in medicine. Nor do the changing pacts and alliances of local medical politics usually endure so long—Lambeth AHA resisted the Labour government's efforts at cuts, with some success, and continued its intransigence until the recent showdown with Thatcher's cabinet. These characteristics have appeared because of the peculiarities of that part of south London, with its Labour-controlled councils represented on the Area Health Authority, and its three highly-active and ambitious teaching hospitals—Guy's, St. Thomas's and King's. Two of these three teaching hospitals (Guy's and St. Thomas's) have just completed major redevelopment programmes, and all three can claim to provide services to the whole of London, and in some cases to the whole of southern England. Such Regional and 'supra-Regional' facilities exist in the form of a kidney dialysis unit at Guy's, an advanced unit for the treatment of liver disease at King's, and the prestigious psychiatric hospital, the Maudsley.

This concentration of new facilities, all needing equipment and staffing, plus the inherently costly specialist units, strains the AHA budget. Any attack on that budget in turn threatens the new developments and specialist units directly and immediately, prompting eminent physicians and surgeons to condemn government directives in public. If the AHA's budget were less committed to the teaching hospitals, and the specialist units less vulnerable, I suspect the medical professions criticism would be proportionately less severe.

What will happen now that the focus of resistance, the AHA itself, has been disbanded? The newly-appointed 'loyal' administration will impose the cash cuts on the Area, leaving the managers at lower level to sort out the precise distribution of cuts with the interested professionals. It is at this stage that the medical profession's unity is most likely to evaporate, as each department and unit seeks to preserve itself. External pressure from trade unions and local pressure-groups may influence this process to some extent, but the world of the management committees at District level and below is largely closed to direct representation by non-professional workers and consumers. The end result in the case of Lambeth AHA, may well be a reduction in some of the highly-specialised medical services provided by the teaching hospitals, at least for a time. Whether these reductions will persist, or whether the very influential hospitals will regain their finance at the expense of other activities—community services, for example—remains to be seen. The evidence suggests that the needs of the teaching hospitals will be a major determinant in the development of health services in south London, in the future as in the past. The weakest parts of the local health service will be forced into second place and hardest hit by economies: community nursing; health visiting; care of the elderly; and general practice.

In a less immediate way this conflict raises questions of long term planning and resource allocation in health care. Why was it necessary to rebuild two teaching hospitals in Lambeth AHA, rather than fund other projects—smaller, community-based hospitals, health centres, clinics? Why should so many highly specialised units be concentrated into one area? Why have units with Regional or supra-Regional functions developed under the control (and with the finance) of an Area Health Authority, rather than a more appropriate Regional or even National body? In the aftermath of the Lambeth AHAs dismissal the trade union and community campaigns against health cuts will come up against these issues, and will have to provide answers for some of them. Evolving specific and detailed policy for the local health services, penetrating the structure of control and command, and fighting for specific changes at each level of administration and planning, the labour movement could stem, divert and perhaps eventually reverse the cuts imposed upon Lambeth AHA. The development of that degree of co-ordination and co-operation between health workers, health service users and the wider labour movement *could* be the real yield of the Lambeth conflict. An escalating chain-reaction of disobedience and confrontation that shakes the DHSS and the Government is not on the cards.

[1] The NHS administration works on the principle of "delegation downwards, accountability upwards", in a three-tiered apparatus responsible to the DHSS. The NHS budget is distributed between 14 Regional Health Authorities, each of which allocates money to the Area Health Authorities under its control. The Areas delegate responsibility for day-to-day administration, and the application of policies to specific communities, to the lowest tier, the Health District. Members of RHAs, AHAs and District Management Teams are appointed, not elected (although elected councillors, trade unionists and professionals chosen by their peers may be nominated for appointment). The Health Authorities and the DMT are serviced by separate full-time staffs.

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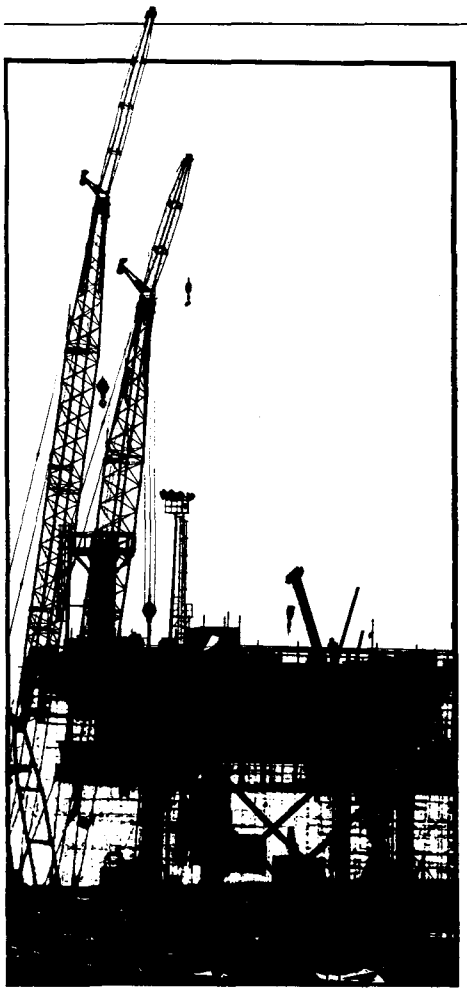

BNOC

The possession of oil and gas reserves is now seen by all countries as being a vital strategic factor outweighing their immediate economic benefits. Self-sufficiency in oil allows the possibility of smooth economic development not subject to external shocks of oil shortages or sudden price rises. The recent strength of the pound demonstrates how highly at least one section of opinion values the North Sea oil and gas reserves.

The control of these reserves is far too important to be left to a handful of multinational oil companies. That too is a lesson which is now understood by all countries in some degree. In particular all European countries have hedged the production and sale of oil and gas with a fairly tight ring of controls. The British state itself has four lines of control over its oil reserves. (Gas is treated somewhat differently in that almost all the gas produced has to be sold to a single agency, the Gas Corporation).

The first is the sale of exploration and development licences and the levying of royalties on oil produced. All oil in the ground belongs to the state; no individual even on land ever benefits from owning land under which is oil. The state sells licences for blocks of the North Sea under British control and attaches certain development conditions such as requiring drilling to be undertaken in two years or the licence is forfeit. The second control is the Submarine Pipelines Act which gives the state quite wide powers to control the pace of oil depletion by requiring that all North Sea oil has to be landed in the UK unless special exemptions are given. This in effect prohibits pipelines going anywhere other than British territory. The third control is purely financial. The state has the power to levy a Petroleum Revenue Tax, an additional tax, over and above royalty payments and corporation tax which is related directly to the output of particular fields.

The final control is vested in the British National Oil Corporation (BNOC) set up by the last Labour government to form a direct state presence in the North Sea.

The purpose of BNOC is clear. The three lines of control mentioned above are all essentially negative; they allow revenue to be taken from oil development and they can prevent, for example, too rapid depletion of reserves. However the actual mechanisms of positive development, the investment decisions, were left wholly in the hands of the oil companies. The state could reject development plans put forward by the companies but it could not initiate them. BNOC was set up to remedy this deficiency.

The powers of BNOC are wide but, in practice, rather vague. The basis of BNOC was, first, a set of rather disparate interests in various oil fields from the National Coal Board oil group (a brave and rather successful attempt by the NCB to widen its energy interests) and the Burmah oil company which went bankrupt at around the time of BNOC's foundation. In addition, BNOC had the right to obtain a 51 per cent share of all North Sea oil. This was by no means as sweeping a power as it sounds for it was firmly stipulated that all acquisitions should be without loss to the oil companies and the financial base of BNOC was kept quite small. Certainly it was never given the financial muscle to buy 51 per cent of the fixed investment already made in such giant fields as Forties and Brent. With such operating fields, BNOC renegotiated the right to buy 51 per cent of produced oil at world market price. This normally was sold back directly to the producing company as BNOC possesses no refining facility. The procedure has a formal aspect; BNOC's oil in such cases is never actually segregated from the company oil but it does confer a degree of control over questions such as point of refining, export policy and so on. The control is however, in practice, decidedly limited. BNOC has not the staff to oversee all the oil which nominally passes through its ownership.

More important for BNOC, it was given important rights in new field development and in future exploration. Although not given anything like full control, it got a seat at all the field development meetings and could take an active part in investment planning. Provided BNOC could put up the capital and provide the expertise, it could exert rather more influence than the veto powers previously held by the state. Both these vital factors were limited but, in time, BNOC has been able to develop a wide influence in the North Sea and is in fact the lead operating company on two major field developments.

In the area of future exploration, the Labour government made it clear that whilst BNOC involvement was not absolutely required for licences to be granted, companies wishing to go it alone would find their chances of obtaining licences severly hampered. It is not likely that the Conservative government will continue this policy.

It is in the light of this slow gathering of expertise and influence, that the recent government pressure for BNOC to sell some of its assets has to be seen. The North Sea is a difficult area for state intervention. The involvement of foreign oil companies and overseas capital is a necessity for there is neither sufficient expertise nor sufficient capital inside Britain. Nevertheless it is absolutely clear that national control will become more and more important. Development of the first giant fields is fairly easy. National interest and company profit coincide to a reasonable degree. But in the later stages, as the fields become smaller, as cooperative development of several fields becomes necessary and as the profits become smaller, interests diverge. It is at this stage that the presence of a BNOC able to take over from the companies becomes crucial.

There is no doubt that forcing BNOC to sell its stake in various fields under development will do nothing but damage to this strategic national perspective. It is not a particularly radical perspective. Every European country, including the France so admired by Mrs Thatcher, has a much tighter control over their countries' oil exploration programmes. Yet it is being jettisoned for the sake of a temporary reduction in the Public Sector Borrowing Requirement, a reduction which in itself will only increase unemployment levels and worsen an impending recession.

Contributors **Steve Iliffe John Ngara Mike Prior Roger Simon**

Coming soon in Marxism Today
Mike Bleaney on the Tory economic strategy
Andrew Gamble on the Tory Party and Thatcherism
Peter Leonard on the welfare state
Agiit Singh on deindustrialisation

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Thatcherism - The Impasse Broken?

Martin Jacques

Where is British politics going? This is a vital question, and some of the answers are unpleasant. Nonetheless they must be faced squarely — because they are crucial in establishing the priorities and practices of the left at a difficult and serious moment in British politics. The recent General Election has thrown into sharp relief certain underlying trends in British politics which we have previously either underestimated or even ignored. The left will do so now at great cost.

I. THE EVOLVING CRISIS

The Early Sixties: A Turning Point

Britain's decline is, of course, no new phenomenon. It dates back at least a century. But it has asserted itself with a new force — after an apparent lull — since the early sixties with profound consequences. Indeed, these years provide us with a new and critical point of departure in British politics.

The 1945 Labour government, under the impact of war and the radicalisation of the working class, carried through a series of major structural changes including nationalisation, the welfare state and full employment. At the same time, it sought to restore Britain's international position in the context of the new post-war situation. This involved the maintenance of the Empire and its legacy together with a major international military and financial role for Britain. The key here was the relationship with the United States; with the latter, given the weakness of other western powers and the onset of the cold war, seeking a special relationship with Britain.

Already, well before their return in 1951, the political centre of gravity in the country was shifting to the Tories. Once in office, they continued with aspects of Labour's domestic policies, for example the welfare state, and almost wholly with its external strategy. Given the relatively favourable international environment — including the preoccupation of key competitors like Japan and West Germany with post-war recovery — this strategy was both viable and allowed relatively rapid economic growth (albeit lethargic by European standards). Indeed, the fifties saw rising living standards, full employment and a relative social stability (which was aided by the cold war). An unusual consensus characterised British society — presided over by the Tories — in which conflict appeared relatively marginal or at least contained.

By the late fifties, early sixties, this apparent picture of social harmony was being undermined. The first cracks in the cold war, the rise of CND, growing concern about the economy, together with other events, combined to create a new situation which served to undermine Conservative dominance and eventually enabled the return of Labour in 1964.

At the centre of this changing situation — though by no means the only factor — was Britain's economic position. By the early sixties, it was becoming increasingly evident that the 'new dawn' of the fifties had only been a temporary interregnum: Britain's relative decline had continued unchecked. The rapid growth of Britain's competitors exposed its underlying weakness. A strategy based on traditional imperial markets, sterling as a reserve currency and Britain as a major military power became increasingly difficult to sustain. As a consequence, during the sixties, there was a growing recognition, not least within ruling circles, that some kind of new response was required.

The Labour Governments 1964-1970

The return of Labour in 1964 occupies a central position in this changing context[1]. Labour's victory stemmed partly from an increasing recognition of the seriousness of Britain's situation, and partly from a growing conviction of the need to modernise the economy and society. Here, Wilson's theme of the 'white hot technological revolution' and his attacks on the social archaism of the Tories struck a popular chord. Labour — in 1964 and even more in 1966 — succeeded in uniting large sections of the working class together with an important section of the middle strata around its appeal.

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Four elements, broadly speaking, characterised the 'modernist' approach of the 1964-70 Labour governments. Firstly, industrial capital was to be made more competitive, partly through increased investment to be achieved by boosting profits and restricting wages through incomes policies (and later trade union legislation). Secondly, the state itself was seen as a key agency for restructuring important areas of industry (for example, the creation of British Leyland and GEC-AEI through the IRC), and rationalising the labour-process (through productivity agreements etc). At the same time, the state itself was identified as a major area for reform — including the civil service (the Fulton Report 1966), higher education, and local government. Thirdly, the Wilson approach rested on tripartite collaboration between the state, big business and the unions, a development which had been initiated in the early sixties by the Tories with Neddy etc, but which now assumed a more central role. Fourthly and lastly, following the effective collapse of sterling as a reserve currency in 1967, the government increasingly looked to the EEC as the new international framework for British capitalism.

The modernism of the Wilson governments, however, proved quite inadequate to the problems. The attempt to reorganise industrial capital was half-hearted, given the profound weakness of Britain's productive base. In this context the central problem was the failure of Labour to tackle the alliance that had underpinned Britain's post-war course and which was responsible for its economic decline; namely, the externally orientated interests of sections of big industrial capital together with the City. Indeed, Labour, between 1964 and 1967, still gave priority to the defence of sterling and only abandoned the latter's reserve role when it was forced to do so. In the process, economic growth was sacrificed. By the late sixties, indeed, little remained of the 'grand design'. Faced with continuing economic difficulties, the government increasingly resorted to one aspect of its modernist strategy, an attack on the economic position of the working class, through bouts of deflation, wage restraint, and then *In Place of Strife*. This led to growing trade union opposition which further undermined Labour's strategy. The failure of modernisation — together with growing tension in its relationship with the working class — eroded Labour's 1966 bloc of support and paved the way for the Tory victory in 1970.

These developments, however, must be placed in a broader context. By the late sixties, a much wider crisis of society was becoming apparent. The student movement, the events of 1968, the beginnings of the nationalist upsurge, the growth of racialism — each was both a symptom and an expression of this wider crisis. The Labour governments had been a *response* to this process, but in the event proved quite incapable of dealing with it.

What Sort of Crisis?

The period of the fifties was not just one of consensus: it was also a phase in which, allied to this national consensus, the ruling bloc (ie big capital, the City, the upper echelons of Whitehall, etc) exercised a comprehensive dominance over British society. By the early sixties, the basis of this dominance, this leadership — or hegemony — was being eroded. Critically, one of its crucial supports, the external imperial strategy, was no longer viable. This had deep and long-term implications. An immediate effect was the defeat of the Tories, the political embodiment of the previous stability and success, and the return of Labour.

But we must see the problem in a wider context than this. The previous ruling strategy was increasingly seen to have failed. This was not just an 'economic question': it concerned Britain's international orientation, its 'standing' in the world, its domestic standard of life, etc. Its failure therefore impinged on all aspects of society: on the prestige of the ruling bloc, on the respect for Britain's political system and institutions, on the identity and definition of Britain as a nation, and on the established pattern of alliances. What was involved, then, was a crisis in the authority of the traditional ruling bloc, a crisis of its leadership, of its hegemony over British society. This did not mean a crisis of hegemony in the sense that the ruling bloc's position has been under open and explicit challenge from the working class. Far from it, indeed. Rather it has been a crisis of the established forms of hegemony, a situation where the old forms of rule, previous ideological assumptions and the established pattern of alliances became increasingly difficult to sustain.

The failure of the old imperial strategy meant that the ruling bloc was obliged to undertake a strategic shift in response. This shift was, in the early sixties, broadly along the lines of Labour's modernism. And it further exacerbated the crisis of hegemony in three key senses. Firstly, popular support had to be won for policies which often involved a major readjustment of attitudes and outlook: that is the modernist strategy itself required a major reorganisation in the forms of hegemony. Entry into the EEC, the growing role of the state and the reform of such institutions as higher education and local government are obvious examples. Secondly, the success of the modernist response in solving the problems it was designed to tackle was crucial if the crisis of hegemony was to be resolved. If, on the contrary, it proved unsuccessful, then that crisis could only grow more acute (which, of course, is what has happened). Finally, the modernist approach — in its diverse Labour and Tory variants — involved new burdens and new costs for working people. This, obviously, greatly increased the delicacy — and vulnerability — of the operation.

The weakening of the established forms of hegemony has been accompanied by, over the period since the mid-sixties, a transformation in the terms of British politics, as different class forces and social groups have been sensitised to new problems and acquired new aspirations. The future of Scotland and Wales, the Irish question, the position of women, morality, the role of trade unionism — the examples are legion. Old conflicts have reappeared in new forms, new contradictions have surfaced for the first time — with their origins lying in a complex interaction between Britain's specific crisis and more general features associated with the development of advanced capitalism. These various developments have posed a profound challenge to the previous pattern of alliances and assumptions and, consequently therefore, also the positions of the various political parties. The rise of nationalism, for example, whose origins again lie both in Britain's specific crisis and new general characteristics of the nation-state[2], challenges the definition of Britain itself, the form of its state system, and has already undermined the previous position of the Tory Party in Scotland.

The Tory Government 1970-1974

The return of the Heath government in 1970 marked a distinct shift in the new phase of British politics ushered in from the mid-sixties. Its character and the nature of its strategy requires some prior consideration of changes in the Tory Party.

The fifties saw the Conservative Party resume what had been its traditional mantle in post-1918 politics — as the main governing party, inextricably linked with the establishment and the national tradition, albeit on the basis of an acceptance of many of Labour's post-war reforms. Such a role was no longer possible in the same way in the new phase; the old assumptions no longer worked and Labour's modernism had to some extent deprived the Tories of the centre

1. For an excellent account of contemporary British politics, see Stuart Hall et al, *Policing the Crisis*, Part III.

2. E J Hobsbawm, 'Some Reflections on "The Break-up of Britain",' *New Left Review* 105.

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ground. In response to this situation the Tory Party began to shift to the right.

In the consensus tradition of the fifties — and long before — the Party had rested on a unique relationship between its high-Tory leadership, characterised by such figures as Macmillan, Eden and Home and enjoying close connections with the City, big capital, and the traditional 'upper classes', and a cadre force drawn from the middle classes, the petty-bourgeoisie, and sections of the working class. In 1965, a key component of this arrangement was removed: the leader was no longer to 'emerge' in the time-honoured patronage style of the establishment, but was to be elected by the parliamentary party. The outgoing incumbent, Home, admirably caricatured the high-Tory leadership model and its imperial tradition: Heath was, up to a point, a more accurate reflection, both in ideology and style, of the cadre force of the Tory Party, in particular its middle classes.

the leader was no longer to 'emerge' in the time-honoured patronage style

These internal changes were closely linked to the strategy evolved under Heath. This was, like the Labour governments before, a response to the new phase, but it was no simple continuation of Labour's particular modernist approach. On the contrary, in one crucial respect, it marked a sharp break with Labour's strategy. In place of interventionism in industry and tripartite planning, for example, the Tories at first leaned heavily on a more laissez-faire conception of economic and industrial policy, laying stress on the function of market forces and a reduced role for the state. At the same time they adopted a more administrative and coercive approach towards working class resistance, as exemplified by the Industrial Relations Act. Indeed, a key theme of the Heath government, more widely, was the need to reassert authority and law and order — in relation to working class militancy, crime, student unrest etc — with the state, including the law, playing a growing role. Finally, the Heath strategy involved a determined and unambiguous attempt to enter the EEC and adopt a fully-fledged 'European' orientation.

The more aggressive attack on the position of the working class, however, led to trade union militancy unparalleled since the 1920s. The Industrial Relations Act, for example, almost resulted in the first General Strike since 1926 with the imprisonment of the Pentonville 5. Indeed, it was the success of this resistance — notably the UCS work-in and the first miners' strike against the policy of 'lame ducks' and (n-i) incomes policy respectively — which finally forced the Tories to abandon their 'market' policies. In their place, they adopted a thorough-going, interventionist approach, which more closely resembled Labour's modernism. This, too, however, met bitter resistance.

A situation, in a sense, of impasse was created. The modernist strategy — in its Heath variant — provoked such working class resistance that key elements of it were either defeated or effectively immobilised. The climax, of course, was the miners' strike, leading to the three day week, a General Election, and the return of a minority Labour government.

The Nature of the Working Class Response and What It Meant

We need to look at this situation rather more closely. The modernist strategy — in its various forms — involved a new kind of attack on the position of the working class. The working class resisted important elements of this offensive — in the period of Labour government and then, more dramatically, with the Tories. A new factor entered the political scene: a level of working class militancy not witnessed since the war. But what was the nature of these struggles? This is a vital question.

Certainly they went beyond the narrowly 'economic', raising wider issues. The UCS struggle, though admittedly exceptional, posed the question of who is competent to run industry, while the struggles against *In Place of Strife* and the Industrial Relations Act had, given the nature of the modernist attempt to contain the working class, a wider democratic aspect. These struggles were also more than simply defensive. The fight to defeat wage restraint, for example, acquired, for the more powerful bargaining groups, the character of a wage offensive. At the same time, some of the battles began to take on a distinctly anti-Tory dimension, particularly the second miners' strike.

Nonetheless, the primary characteristic of these struggles was a *trade union* response to the offensive of the Labour and particularly the Conservative governments. They represented a limited and predominantly defensive response to aspects of the modernist strategy. Their hallmark was resistance to wage restraint, 'lame ducks' and trade union legislation — though other issues were also, to a lesser degree, encompassed. In coming to terms with the significance of this resistance, it is important to grasp the breadth of the modernist strategy. The more dramatic features were trade union legislation, wage restraint, etc — because of the working class response. But the attempt to modernise went well beyond this, embracing higher education, reform of the judiciary, entry into the EEC, new immigration laws, police reform, restructuring of the health service, reform of the civil service, local government, and so forth[3]. It is obviously difficult to generalise across such a wide area, particularly as there were also important differences between the approaches of the Wilson and Heath governments: there was, however, a general tendency towards more centralised and less democratic forms. Now while the 'industrial relations' aspect of the strategy was in large measure successfully resisted, the great majority of the others were not, and some, for example reform of local government, encountered relatively little opposition. This is important for two reasons: firstly, the modernist strategy involved a much wider attempt to rationalise British society and change the balance of class relationships than the left has fully grasped; secondly, it tells us something about the limitations of working class consciousness.

This second point needs taking further. One of the key indications of the nature of working class resistance was the fact that it did not gravitate in any mass way towards political organisation or new kinds of political solutions. There was, of course, a powerful and widespread anti-Toryism, but not much beyond. Indeed, in this context, other problems were revealed in the 1974 elections which we will look at shortly. In some ways, this picture is not surprising. We are, after all, confronted with a quite central political problem, namely, that the mass party of the working class, the Labour Party, was itself — in government — one of the main vehicles for the modernist strategy. The fact that it adopted a more militant rhetoric during the Heath period does not change the issue. At the same time, although left militants and Communists emerged as key rank-and-file leaders in the Heath phase, political support for the alternative positions of the Communist Party and Labour left remained, in popular grassroots terms, marginal, though these positions made some progress within the labour movement itself. It should be added here, also, that the left, including the Communist Party, itself tended to exaggerate the impact of the industrial militancy of the period on the political consciousness of the working class and to underestimate the relative importance of independent political activity on the shopfloor, including inadequate attention to Communist workplace organisation.

[3] For instance, Hall, *op cit;* P. Corrigan, 'The Local State', *Marxism Today*, July 1979; M. Jacques, 'Universities and Capitalism', *Marxism Today*, July 1975.

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This leads me to the wider question of underlying trends in this new phase of British politics. The argument above is that working class resistance successfully prevented the implementation of important aspects of the modernist strategy of both the Labour and Tory governments. This resistance, however, was both limited in scope and primarily defensive. British politics was — and is — therefore characterised by a certain *impasse:* the ruling bloc has been unable to secure the working class acquiescence it required in key areas, the working class itself was unable to unite around an alternative political solution. Like all impasses of this character, however, it cannot last forever: it will be resolved, ultimately, either by a decisive shift to the left or right based on a major realignment of class forces.

This situation of impasse, however, must be placed in its broader context. The crisis of hegemony, far from being resolved by the turn towards a modernist strategy, was actually exacerbated by it. Labour's particular modernist response failed ignominiously. The popular resistance of the working class, in helping to undermine the Heath strategy, and ultimately the Heath government as well, further aggravated this more general crisis of hegemony. The most dramatic illustration was working class militancy, but this should not blind us to a wider process of fragmentation, erosion and realignment that was taking place. This found expression in the widening range of issues and conflicts that developed including around immigration and race relations, law and order, morality, the national question, and women. Moreover, these issues were not somehow fenced off from those sections involved in the industrial militancy of the 1970-74 period: on the contrary, these groups were as intimately affected as others by this broad panorama of issues.

In the 1974 election, this widening crisis of hegemony found clear political expression — it surfaced, with a new twist, at the level of party politics. Labour was returned, but with its lowest share of the vote since 1935. The prime reason for this was that new political forces came to represent the emergent elements of this widening crisis; the resurgence of nationalist politics in Scotland and Wales around the SNP and Plaid Cymru, the growing polarisation within Northern Ireland, and the dramatic rise of the Liberals within England led to the most hybrid parliament since the twenties. The threat to the two–party system, as it had operated more or less since 1931, was because new political forces came to tap — however temporarily — some of the new currents in British society.

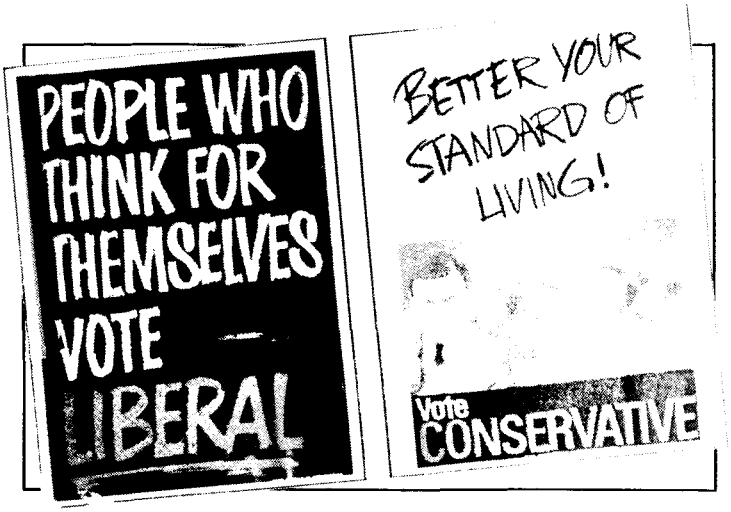
Two points merit particular emphasis here. Firstly the crisis of hegemony increasingly threatened the established position of the Labour Party and the Conservative Party. This was revealed, above all, by the two elections in 1974. Secondly, the industrial militancy of these years, whilst producing a minority Labour government, did not result in any significant shift to the left in British society as a whole. Indeed, we can detect in this period a continuing process in which the bonds between the labour movement as a political force, and the people, were weakened.

The Labour Governments 1974-9

Labour's return in 1974 took place in the context of heightened working class militancy and a significant shift to the left in the Party as illustrated by the 1974 Manifesto. For the first year or so this was reflected in the Government's policies, notably the dismantling of the more offensive aspects of the Tories' industrial relations policies and the legislating of a new deal for the unions.

This did not imply any major change of direction. Rather it must be seen as part of the Government's attempt to ensure working class acquiescence in the central tenets of its strategy. As opposed to the 'coercion' of the Tories, which had ultimately been shipwrecked, the Wilson-Callaghan axis claimed it could achieve trade union cooperation rather through consent — based on the social contract.

The fundamental contours of Labour's approach became much clearer from mid-1975, following the defeat of the left in the EEC referendum campaign. Formally speaking, the modernist project remained, but, as Britain's own economic crisis grew increasingly acute with the onset of the international capitalist recession, the Government's approach consisted of little more than pragmatic crisis–management in which the central element was securing working class acquiescence to cuts in real wages and public expenditure together with rising unemployment. Indeed, it paved the way for the more doctrinaire attack of Thatcherism on the post–1945 gains. At the same time it did virtually nothing to undo the Tory measures in such areas as local government and immigration, though its minority status must be seen as a factor, albeit a secondary one, in this.



Two wider themes need to be explored in this context. The first concerns a hitherto singular feature of the new phase: working class resistance to aspects of the modernist strategy. The return of Labour in 1974 inevitably cast this in a more complex mould. Resistance in a situation of Tory government could spontaneously associate with popular anti-Toryism, with Labour as the alternative. This option did not exist for the labour movement in a situation of Labour government. This undoubtedly was a key factor in the support won throughout the labour movement and amongst the working class for the social contract. But the deepening recession was also a very important factor here. It specifically affected working class resistance in two ways: it acted as a disciplining factor, making, for example, conventional forms of wage-militancy, for sections threatened by unemployment, less viable. It also greatly intensified the level and feeling of 'national crisis'.

Working class quiescence finally broke with the 'winter of discontent' in 1978-9. It followed major struggles in the trade union movement and was a renewed, if belated, demonstration of working class resistance to the harshest yet attacks on its living standards. But this, too, bore the imprint of the new context of recession and Labour government. On the one hand, the militancy of these months tended to be more sectionalised and fragmented than that of the Heath period and, on the other hand, it contained within it a new, understandable but nonetheless disturbingly anti-Labour current (for example, in the Ford strike[4], in the NUPE action and, on a different note, the election result).

The second theme concerns our wider context of the underlying erosion of established social alliances and political patterns. In the latter years of Labour's tenure, there was growing evidence of a shift to the right in the country. This, of course, was partly related to the traditional mechanics of the two-party system — with the Conservatives being the 'natural' alternative during a period of Labour govern-

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ment. But it was also much more than that. The deepening crisis of hegemony — the failure of this Labour government and the previous Heath government — led to new tensions and realignments. In response, a new kind of popular rightism began to gain ground. Already by 1966 (and indeed earlier), the contours of such an approach were evident with the rise of Powellism. The diverse progressive expressions of the late sixties (and subsequently) — the student movement, the 'underground', the women's movement — contributed towards the emergence and definition of a conservative backlash. The development of working class militancy in the Heath period provided a new, powerful and more political focus. The increasing gravity of Britain's situation from 1974, including the assertion of the politics of recession, together with Labour's failure, gave it further momentum.

A number of its characteristics merit particular stress here. It was a populist development in that it had a powerful presence at the grassroots and was not confined to the organisational structures of the political right. This found reflection in the character of some of its leaders, such as Powell and Whitehouse, who were essentially 'charismatic' figures whose support did not depend simply on their formal positions within established organisations.

It was also an increasingly global movement. Its dominant philosophical characteristic was essentially backward-looking, the desire to assert traditional ideological themes such as the family, the nation, patriotism, free enterprise and authority. It embraced a multitude of responses including the Black Papers on education, Chicago monetarism, the Festival of Light, SPUC, the National Viewers' and Listeners' Association, the Institute of Economic Affairs, the National Front and racialism. Finally, this broad right trend — at once economic, social, cultural and ideological — increasingly, and especially after the fall of the Heath government, became linked, through figures such as Keith Joseph and Rhodes Boyson, to political developments in the Tory Party as expressed in 'Thatcherism'. This link was a moment of great significance in the evolution of the rightist response to the crisis of hegemony.

II POLITICAL FORCES AND THE NEW PHASE

A central theme of our argument is that the established framework of British politics has, since the mid-sixties, been steadily eroded. The expressions are numerous: the precipitous decline of Britain as an international power including the collapse of the Empire and imperial role together with consequent realignments, the emergence of new national tensions within Britain, powerful working class militancy, persistent and chronic economic crisis, a new social challenge from women and now a growing threat to the post-1945 achievements of full employment, the welfare state and the nationalised sector. These developments have weakened previous class and social alignments, provoked a growing crisis of hegemony and challenged the established structures, assumptions and ideologies of the Right and Left in British politics.

The Tory Party

The Tory Party has come under profound challenge in the new context of British politics. In the period 1964-79, it has been in government for only four out of a total of fourteen years — compared, for example, with 37 out of 46 between 1918 and 1964 (including the coalition governments from 1931 to 1945 in which the Tories were generally the dominant force). The Tory Party can thus no longer be regarded as the dominant national party in the way it was prior to the mid-sixties. In the period from 1964 until the 1979 election, indeed, it has faced a serious if erratic electoral decline and important fissures in its bloc of support. The Tory Party, as a consequence, has been posed with the growing need to recoup and reorganise its social base.

Tory Share(%) of Vote at General Elections 1945-1979[5]

1945	39.8	1966	41.9
1950	43.5	1970	46.4
1951	48.0	1974(Feb)	37.9
1955	49.7	1974(Oct)	35.8
1959	49.4	1979	43.9
1964	43.4		

The dominant response within the Tory Party since the mid-sixties to its own problems on the one hand and Britain's crisis on the other has been of a rightist complexion. It found its first expression — within the mainstream of Tory politics — in Heath, especially the Heath of 'Selsdon' and the 1970-72 period, and then, more clearly in the rise of Thatcherism[6].

The precise character of Thatcherism is complex. Two clear elements, however, can be pinpointed. Firstly, there is a strong emphasis on a more traditional arguably petty-bourgeois ideology — the virtues of the market, competition, elitism, individual initiative, the iniquities of state intervention and bureaucracy. In a sense, this represents a return to the pre-Butskellism, pre-1950s style of Tory politics: it is also quite explicitly an attempt to roll back the collectivist notion associated with the post-war advances of the labour movement. In a period of recession (perhaps mainly in its earlier stages), their individualist values strike — indeed have struck — a real chord amongst people well beyond even the traditional areas of Tory support. Secondly, Thatcherism has successfully attempted to organise the diverse forces of the 'backlash' — reacting against trade union militancy, national aspirations, permissiveness, women's liberation — in favour of an essentially regressive and conservative solution embracing such themes as authority, law and order, patriotism, nationl unity, the family and individual freedom.

Thatcherism, in this context, must be seen as a rejection of major aspects of the modernist approach as it has evolved since the mid-sixties. Indeed, this has been a key source of its appeal — the need for change, a break with the unsuccessful past. Instead, Thatcherism seeks to restructure industry through the operation of market forces and to curtail drastically the economic activities of the state. In contrast with the previous Labour governments and the second phase of the Heath government, it is deeply and ideologically opposed to state intervention. It seeks to reverse the structural achievements of the labour and democratic movements and, at the same time, coupled with a comprehensive, popularly-based ideological and political offensive, undermine working class resistance to this process of rationalisation. Thatcherism thus combines a right laissez-faire economic strategy with reactionary and authoritarian populism.

This assertion of popular *and* authoritarian rightism in the context of a more divided and polarised society is *new*. It is a rejection of the notion of the Tory Party as the party of consensus, as the national party in the old sense. It is a *new* response by the right to the underlying crisis of hegemony. It seeks to resolve that crisis and the accompanying impasse by mobilising a reorganised, expanded and sensitised social base embracing sections of the middle classes, the petty bourgeoisie and the working class together with key elements of

4. The Ford Strike: interview with Dan Connor,' *Marxism Today*, February 1979, Pp 39-40.

5. D. Butler and Anne Sloman, *British Political Facts 1900-1975*, Pp 184-6; *The Times Guide to the House of Commons May 1979*.

6. T Russel, *The Tory Party*, 1978.

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big capital etc.

The 1979 election marked a major victory for this radical right. It fought a highly ideological campaign: it argued that a profound change was now necessary: it brought together the various components of popular rightism in a global and coherent form: it represents thus, a new and more ominous challenge for the left. Whether, however, Thatcherism will, by these means, successfully transform the balance of class relations, whether, that is, it will be able to solve the crisis of hegemony on the basis of a powerful and popular rightist social base is extremely unlikely. Its social base remains fragile and it will face widespread opposition. Moreover, crucially, a right laissez-faire economic strategy is completely inappropriate as an instrument for tackling the chronic and historic character of Britain's crisis. Indeed, in the face of widespread opposition and economic failure, big capital itself may seek other options.

The Crisis of Social Democracy

There has recently been considerable discussion of the fortunes of the labour movement over the last three decades. That controversy is readily understandable. On the surface, at least, we are presented with something of a paradox: on the one hand, the unparalleled success of the Labour Party as a governmental force, the growing power of the trade unions and the importance of the working class, on the other hand a declining Labour share of the vote and a falling membership of the Labour Party and, indeed, also of the Communist Party. How do we sort out this paradox?

The new phase of British politics posed the labour movement with a new situation. The erosion of Tory-dominated consensus politics from the late fifties gave the Labour Party a new opportunity: its response was to pose as the champion of modernism, an appeal that enabled it to hold office from 1964-70 (and, in degenerate form, again later). Here we are confronted with an important characteristic of the new phase. Labour now became the predominant party of government. But the strategy of modernisation it sought to carry through — aimed at a major transformation of the economy and society — proved not only completely inadequate relative to the nature and scope of the problem but, crucially, it also involved a new kind of attack on the position of the unions and, more widely, the working class, that is on its own social base.

This is crucial to understanding a key facet of the new phase of British politics — the decline of the Labour Party as a popular political organisation. We need to give some details of this process. Labour's share of the vote at General Elections has declined from 44.1% and 47.9% in 1964 and 1966 respectively, to 43% in 1970, 37% and 39.2% in the two 1974 elections and 36.9% in 1979. The fact that it was nonetheless able to form minority governments in 1974 was because the Tories experienced an even bigger decline. In addition, the Labour Party's individual membership — a crucial barometer of its effectiveness as a party — has declined from 830,000 in 1964 to 680,000 in 1970 and 676,000 in 1978 (ie according to the official figures which themselves are an overestimate). It is clear these trends represent a very serious erosion of the Labour Party's position in British society.

Labour Share(%) of Vote at General Elections 1945-1979[7]

1945	47.8	1966	47.9
1950	46.1	1970	43.0
1951	48.8	1974(Feb)	37.1
1955	46.4	1974(Oct)	39.2
1959	43.8	1979	36.9
1964	44.1		

Labour Party Individual Membership 1945-1978[8]

1945	487,000	1966	776,000
1950	908,000	1970	690,000
1955	843,000	1974	692,000
1961	751,000	1978	676,000
1964	830,000		

7. *Ibid.* 8. Labour Party Annual Conference Reports.

Explaining this is obviously not easy: many factors are involved. Moreover, as is clear from the table, it is not simply a post 64 / 66 problem. For the decline in the new phase is also part of a longer-run tendency which was briefly reversed in the early-mid sixties. This longer-run tendency is, amongst other things, related to Labour's inability to respond adequately to underlying trends in society, such as changes in the class and occupational structure. But here we are concerned specifically with the new phase of British politics. Clearly, a crucial factor in this period has been the role of Labour governments as the central vehicle for the modernist strategy. This has meant that the Labour Party has become increasingly identified with an attempt to restructure the economy and society in a manner which did not seriously challenge the key pillars of power (the big firms, the City, the character of Whitehall, the public schools etc) and which brought it into conflict with its own social base, the organised working class. And, moreover, if it needs adding, that strategy has been patently unsuccessful.

This attempt to modernise without disturbing the underlying structure of power has meant that far from being able to champion those broad democratic movements that have developed in recent years, partly as a response to this strategy, Labour governments have been in direct opposition to many of them. Far from, for example, being able to pose as the champion of new democratic aspirations, Labour has become identified with the increasing use of the state in an administrative, impersonal, bureaucratic and even authoritarian manner; or, to put it another way, a growing trend towards statism. This, of course, is not the whole picture. There have been, and are, important countervailing pressures, related to the character of the Labour Party and its social base. And these have found expression in, amongst other things, sexual equality legislation and belatedly, devolution. The dominant tendency, however, is apparent.

The implications of this have been profound. The Labour Party for many people, *especially* young people, is no longer seen as an effective

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oppositional, anti-establishment force: on the contrary, for many it has become an establishment party, partially incorporated into the state structures. This degeneration is well illustrated by comparing the social ambition of the 1945 government and even the modernising appeal of the 1964 campaign with the retreat into managerial pragmatism evident in 1979. Inevitably, this has undermined the position of the Labour Party as a *party,* rooted in society, enjoying a popular activist base, and committed to reforming society.

Of course, there can be no simple return to the past — 1945 or whatever. Indeed, Labour's victory then was the product of a specific post-war situation and its strategy depended upon Britain's continuing international strength. That material base and the space it provided has gone. Moreover, the social reforms that Labour pioneered then, such as the welfare state and a nationalised sector, were, up to a point, consolidated: increasingly, indeed, attention was focused on the problems they gave rise to — for example, accountability and bureaucracy. Where next? Apart from the brief upsurge of modernism in the sixties, right social democracy had little to offer. Yet there is no simple process of linear advance. Unless new directions are charted and popularised, then existing positions will be undermined and past gains threatened. We are faced, thus, with a very deep and wide-ranging crisis — indeed, exhaustion — of right social democracy from which no section of the left is completely immune.

The Rise of Trade Unionism

An historic feature of the British working class has been the strength of its trade union organisation and consciousness. This has been clearly revealed in the new phase of British politics. Indeed, the latter has been accompanied by a strengthening of trade unionism — the unionisation of new sections including women and white-collar groups, the consolidation of shop-floor organisation, the encompassing of new issues. Specifically, the attack on the economic position of the working class involved in the modernist strategy has produced a powerful trade union response: it is that response, that resistance, which has been a primary factor in foiling the various modernist solutions and ensuring the continuing impasse at the centre of British politics.

This response has been primarily economic and defensive in character — although it has, of course, had wide political implications. We must remember, however, that militant trade union activity does not automatically transform working class consciousness in a leftward direction or produce a general political advance. Indeed, while trade union resistance has helped to prevent the ruling bloc solve the crisis on its terms, it has been accompanied by a decline in the established forms of Labour and socialist consciousness. The most striking example of this was 1970-4. Trade unionism, thus, cannot act as a substitute for political forms of consciousness, organisation and practice. Any illusions about this can only serve — indeed have served — to weaken the left's independent political identity and intervention.

The role played by the unions has been bound up with important political changes in the trade union movement. In this context, the shift to the left over the last 10-15 years (though ambiguous and partially reversed in the more recent period) has been very significant. It has been crucial in enabling the kind of resistance we have discussed to happen: further, although it has taken place primarily around forms of opposition to the economic attacks on the working class, it has also helped to generate within the trade union movement — and the Labour Party — pressures for a more radical change, as the growing support for alternative economic policies indicates. The trade unions do indeed, have a real political importance and potential: but they cannot substitute for political organisation nor can they act as a political vanguard.

Consciousness and the Left

When it comes to mass consciousness, the new phase of British politics presents us with a complex picture. The last fifteen years has seen the development of a diverse and rich range of democratic movements: on the one hand, the strengthening of the trade union movement with the emergence of new forms of organisation and action (eg combine committees, Lucas Aerospace Plan) and, on the other hand, the development of new movements, such as the nationalist forces, women's movement, abortion campaign, black movement and community organisations. But these have been accompanied by a decline in the established forms of Labour and socialist consciousness and organisation.

Right social-democracy has been quite unable to assimilate these aspirations and thereby renew the labour movement as a political force. Indeed, it has found itself in opposition to many of them. And ultimately this has led to deep inroads being made into Labour's established social bloc. The question posed now is how can the labour movement, under the impulse of the left, begin to construct a new and enlarged system of alliances.

This is clearly a critical problem for the labour movement. But it is also likely to acquire a new urgency for other democratic movements.

Thatcherism represents a new kind of global rightism. Its offensive impinges on most areas of society.

Thatcherism represents a new kind of global rightism. Its offensive impinges on most areas of society. This is likely to mean that a certain space which existed previously will now be under pressure and that these movements will be forced onto the defensive (eg devolution, immigration, abortion, trade union rights). In other words, for them too, the ability of the labour movement to demonstrate a wider political and social leadership will become of more obvious and central importance.

In this context, it should be noted that social alliances can only acquire permanence, stability and strategic perspective through *political* organisation and intervention. That, ironically, is one of the lessons of Thatcherism. This does not mean that political organisation — be it the Labour Party or the Communist Party (in their different ways, of course) — can in any way substitute for such democratic forces. Rather, it is to argue that part of their unique contribution is to enable these various forces to act in concert, to acquire coherence as a social bloc with a political identity and direction. The new context of Thatcherism — and recession — may now elevate the problem of political organisation in a way not seen previously in the new phase. Its role will be critical in enabling a coming together — in a new way — of the labour and democratic movements.

But the response, here, of the political organisations of the working class will be crucial. And ultimately, the position of the political left will be vital — in helping to bring about the necessary profound transformation of the labour movement (not *just* in policies but also style of work, priorities and practice) that is required. That political left — by which is meant here the Labour left, the Communist Party, and others — remains, in numerical terms, very weak and fragmented. Under the impact of the crisis of hegemony, it too has been forced to undertake a process of change and renewal. That process is incomplete. In general, it remains too narrowly oppositional in its outlook; it tends to be stronger on economic than political questions; its influence within the labour movement is far greater than its wider base in society (and its own style of work reflects this). Nonetheless, in key ways, it has acquired a new strength and potential as a result of this renewal (though with some way to travel as the election showed);

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and this in a situation where all the attempted right solutions to Britain's crisis have consistently and miserably failed.

The Labour left

One of the most important responses to the crisis of social democracy has been on the one hand a strengthening of the left within the Labour Party and on the other hand a limited shift in the politics of that left.

The Labour left is now arguably a stronger force in the Labour Party than at any stage since the war. This has, in recent years, found some expression at all levels within the Labour Party — including the Annual Conference, the National Executive Committee, Parliamentary Labour Party and constituency parties. The reasons for this are manifold: the recognised failure of Labour governments, the tendency towards schisms in the traditionally close relationship between the unions and the right-wing Labour leadership, the decline of the Labour Party and the specific role played by the EEC issue.

The rise of the left has also been a product of significant changes in its own character, largely centred around Benn's position. Traditionally, the Labour left has tended to act as the conscience of the Party, more concerned with long-term objectives and moral questions than the immediate problems of tactics and policies. In a sense, therefore, it has tended to complement rather than contradict the right which has been of the opposite orientation. During the seventies, however, the left — including the Tribune Group — has become increasingly concerned, in the context of the failure of Labour in office, with the elaboration of alternative policies, notably in the economic and industrial fields, but also more widely, which provide the kernel of a different kind of democratic modernist solution. As a result, it has entered battle with the right in a way which represents a real threat to the latter's position of domination within the Party.

This is clearly of great importance occurring as it does within the major working class party. We need to add, however, a number of other points, partly by way of qualification. Firstly, the left itself, despite this progression, remains very diverse, with a number of different strands. Apart from the Benn tendency, it includes, for example, moral-liberalism, fundamentalism and Trotskyism. Secondly, the left, for the most part, remains tied to an essentially electoralist-parliamentary view of politics, not only in theory but also in its practice. In this context, it tends to give, at best, only a secondary, supportive role to social and economic forces outside the Labour Party (and more unevenly, the trade union movement). This is evident, for example, in its attitude towards industrial movements, broad nationalist forces, the women's movement and the Anti-Nazi League. But this is a wider problem than simply the left: it is bound up with the nature of the Labour Party itself as a political organisation. Finally, we must be realistic about the extent to which the left — in its diversity — has developed an overall alternative to that of the right: devolution, sexism, the social contract and reform of local government provide good examples here.

The development of a more powerful and refined Labour left is of critical importance for the transformation of the Labour Party. There is still, of course, a long way to go. And some of its limitations must be seen as wider limitations of the Labour Party itself as a vehicle for transforming popular consciousness. Nonetheless, the advances of the past period are an indication of certain possibilities.

The Communist Party

Of all the forces on the left, the Communist Party has probably been the most influenced by and responsive to the questions raised and forces unleashed by the crisis of hegemony. The Party has been deeply affected, for example, by industrial militancy, feminism, the nationalist resurgence and the student movement. In the process we have been forced to re-evaluate some of our own positions. The new edition of our programme, *The British Road to Socialism* — specifically such concepts as the broad democratic alliance, the mode of rule and the revolutionary process — evolved as responses, above all, to this crisis of hegemony. Indeed, it represents by far the most advanced *strategic* response to have come from the left. The Party has thus gone through a profound process of change over the last decade which was both essential and involved a major reorientation of our politics.

In practice, that reorientation is not yet complete. In particular, in the light of the Party's new programme, we have also to renew and clarify the precise role and practice of the Party. This is crucial if the Party is to develop a clear, popular identity. That is no easy problem — but it is a most urgent task. The biggest single weakness of the Party's practice in the new phase of British politics — and in contrast to our programme (which, in part, was a response) — has been a tendency to underestimate the extent of the crisis and the range of issues around which popular support can be mobilised.

Perhaps we could single out one key question — how to regenerate the Party's industrial base? As we have learnt during the last decade, the central problem facing the left over the next period concerns the relationship between politics and the working class, how to revive political consciousness within, in particular, the heartlands of the working class. Despite its smallness, the Party, because of its character, can play a crucial role in this respect. But to do this we must overcome some of the limitations in our own life and work — for instance, the separation between 'industrial' work and other areas of Party life, a tendency to relegate the Party's political role in the workplace to trade union activity (which is not to underrate the latter's importance) and a too-often formalistic conception of the nature and role of workplace organisation. Overcoming these weaknesses is crucial to transforming the effectiveness of the Party's political intervention in industry and winning a new generation of young industrial militants to our ranks.

Notwithstanding its size — compared, for example, with the Labour Party — the Party can play a unique role in helping to transform the labour movement and popular consciousness. It is inconceivable that any major progressive change can be wrought in British politics without the presence of an independent Marxist force. The developments in the Party over the past period have indicated the potential; the task is how to translate that into political reality.

III PROSPECTS

With the result of the recent General Election, British politics has taken a significant turn for the worse. The Tories, on the basis of a pronounced shift to the right and by mobilising in a specifically ideological fashion an enlarged social base of discontent and reaction, succeeded in inflicting on the Labour Party a major defeat, with the latter polling its lowest share of the vote since the disaster of 1931.

Already it is clear that the Tories meant what they said.

Already it is clear that the Tories meant what they said. A wide-ranging attack on the position of the working class and on the democratic achievements of the post-war period has commenced, the ferocity of which will overshadow anything we have witnessed since the war. In this context it is appropriate to pose three questions. Firstly, will Thatcherism succeed, economically by resolving Britain's crisis and politically by ending the long-running impasse? Secondly, what kind of resistance will be mounted? And thirdly, what are the prospects for a political comeback by the labour movement and, more widely, the latter's renewal?

As suggested earlier, the Tories' 'laissez-faire' economic strategy is

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fundamentally inappropriate given the nature and gravity of Britain's economic crisis — even if, for the sake of argument, they were able to cajole the working class into acquiescence. The forces of the market have long ago demonstrated their inadequacy at modernising and restoring our industrial base. While in the face of failure on this front, together with growing opposition, Thatcher's popular base is likely to be threatened. The outcome of such a failure is difficult to predict. It may, as considered shortly, result in Labour's return. But there are other possible scenarios, depending on the balance of political forces and the precise time-scale. These could include, in the shorter-term, some kind of rapprochement between the Heath and Thatcher positions (a position which might become favoured by sections of big capital), a more straightforward victory for the Heath position or, in the longer-term, even a shift within the right towards a populist authoritarian *and* interventionist solution. (While other political forces, like the Liberal Party and SNP, as in 1974, may also revive.) In other words, if it needs underlining, the defeat of Thatcherism would not necessarily result (in the short or longer-run) in a shift to the left. That depends, not least, on the labour movement itself.

We come now to the question of resistance. The ferocity of the Tory attack will ensure a wave of struggles in response. We should not, however, assume that we are in for a simple return to the experiences of 1970-74. In at least two ways, conditions are very different. Firstly, Britain's economic crisis is very much more acute, with large-scale unemployment, and the prospects, given the likelihood of a deterioration in the international capitalist recession, are that this will get significantly worse. This will inevitably — indeed already has — affected people's perspectives. It will, for example, make, for important sections of workers, the defence of jobs, industries and areas more important and wage struggles less of an option. Secondly, the political climate is different: there has been a marked shift to the right, notwithstanding the fact that large numbers of people who voted Tory were not convinced 'Thatcherists' and are now probably regretting where they put their cross. This is likely to mean that defensive action will now take place in a less permissive, more aggressive atmosphere. The extent and success of resistance is, therefore, to a greater extent than previously, likely to be linked to the effectiveness with which broader alliances are forged in these struggles and, also, plausible alternatives advanced.

So, thirdly, what of the labour movement's prospects? It could be that the degree of resistance is such that the Government is either obliged to leave earlier than its term of office, or that it is forced to soften its anti-working class offensive. In either case, the possibilities of a Labour victory are real. But crucially, what are the prospects not simply of a Labour victory along the broad lines of 1974 (ie reduced share of the vote, weakened mass party etc) but on the basis of the beginnings of a reversal in the long-term decline of the Labour Party and also, therefore, of a different kind of Labour government? Indeed, it could be that, in the new political situation since the election, this is a necessary condition for preventing a prolonged rather than foreshortened period of Tory government. There are two particular questions to examine here. The first concerns likely trends in popular consciousness. The initial response to deeper recession has been a turn by many people towards traditional capitalist values of initiative and austerity. As these solutions are seen increasingly not to work, as for example the crisis of specific industries and areas becomes more intense, then people may well become more sympathetic to collectivist forms of action (for instance, around unemployment, the cuts in public services and racialism — all of which, to be successful, depend on such) and solution. In other words, it may well be that in the longer-run (and we are probably talking in those terms), the politics of depression will propel people towards social and collectivist rather than sectional and privatised forms of response.

But this obviously depends on the second question, the response of the labour movement, which we can only very briefly touch upon here. This, of course, is bound up with the renewal of the left itself and its wider influence within the labour movement and more broadly. Here we are concerned, centrally, with the breadth and scale of opposition to the Thatcher offensive, but also with much more. We have, above all, to find the ways of linking these struggles, on a mass basis, to popular, practical alternatives. This must be a critical element of the left's intervention in all arenas. One key field is obviously the economic. But we must do it across the widest range of issues: law and order, education, devolution, state bureaucracy and so forth. The success of Thatcherism has been linked to its wide-ranging appeal. The labour movement must, in response, demonstrate its breadth, practicality and vision. What is involved here is the ability of the labour movement — under the aegis of the left — to champion a new kind of national alternative, a new type of democratic modernism for British society, with broad popular appeal and capable of resolving the crisis in a new way. It is in this spirit that the left has to find the ways of making a new kind of mass politics around some of the key issues for the eighties — such as unemployment, the future of the welfare state and democracy. The UCS, the ANL, the labour movement's emergence on the national question in Scotland and Lucas Aerospace — to name a few instances — are excellent examples on which to draw.

It is this kind of response which can pave the way for the labour movement's own renewal as a political force, the building of a new set of alliances and the transformation of its position in society. It would also begin to open up the possibility of resolving the impasse in favour of the working class. The alternative could eventually mean a chapter even worse than Thatcherism. That is the challenge facing our Party and the wider left. □

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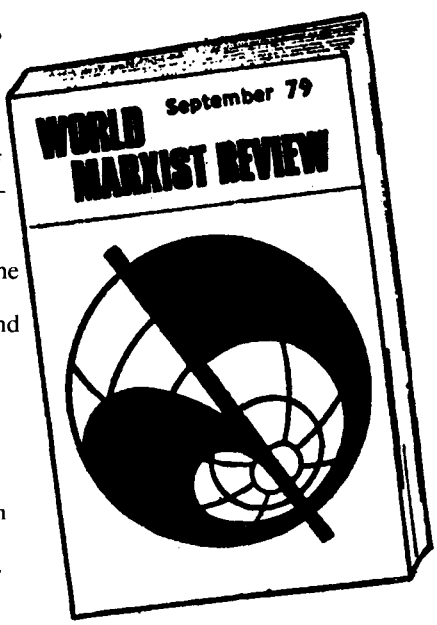

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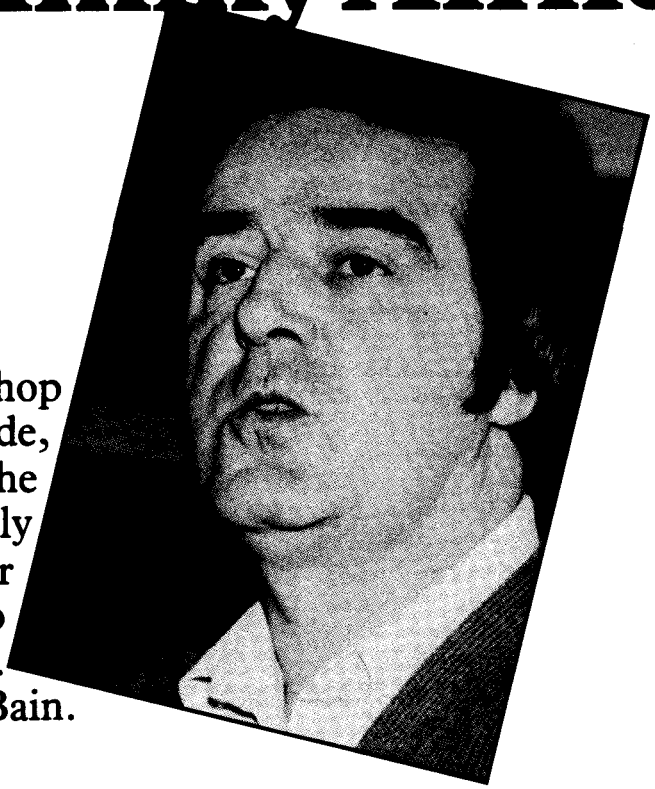
Interview with Jimmy Airlie



Jimmy Airlie, shop steward on Clydeside, one of the leaders of the UCS struggle and recently elected AUEW organiser discusses the present threat to shipbuilding, and other issues. Interviewed by Dougie Bain.

Just how serious an effect would the closures and redundancies proposed by British Shipbuilders have on the industry?

Total disaster. Effectively, in the longer term, it would lead to the destruction of Britain's merchant shipbuilding industry. The proposed maximum of 400,000 gtr just couldn't be sustained in the longer run and the industry would cease to be viable.

Now we're not arguing that every last job in the industry can be saved. In that sense we're realists. But we are adamant that there will be no reduction in the facilities and yards within British Shipbuilders. That's cardinal.

Could you say something about the alternative proposals brought forward by the Govan Joint Shop Stewards Committee to resolve the present crisis.

Well, of course, these proposals are no longer just the property of the Govan stewards — they were unanimously adopted in total at the special conference of shipbuilding unions convened on August 23rd by the Confederation of Shipbuilding and Engineering Unions.

So what are we saying? Basically and fundamentally we're arguing that the work is there to keep the shipbuilding industry operating at roughly its present level if certain things are done. And we're suggesting 22 possibilities. I'm not going to go through the points — they've been published in the press and so on. But the point is this: *if the Government has the will* it can do a whole range of things to keep the industry going, preserve jobs and, at the same time, serve the best social and economic interests of Britain. That's it in a nutshell.

In addition we're making the point that the Government's two year financial limitation is totally unrealistic and must be both eased and extended.

How important is it for the shipbuilding workers to win this fight?

I don't think it's any accident that British Shipbuilders have decided to put the boot into Scotland first. The shipbuilding workers here on the Clyde are the best organised in Britain and if British Shipbuilders can batter through their closures and cuts up here, they know it will be easier in the future to hack away at the rest. So my first point is that this fight is about the future of one of Britain's most important, basic industries and about the communities that depend on that industry.

But it goes beyond that. You know how difficult it's been to get the fight-back on closures and redundancies — Monsanto, Prestcold, Singers, Goodyear and all the rest. It's got to be stopped. The line's got to be drawn somewhere and we're drawing it here on the Clyde. We're challenging the whole trend to de-industrialisation and we made that clear from the Confed Conference in August.

So, in effect, we're challenging the strategy of this Tory government. Not for party-political reasons but because they are experimenting on workers and their families with their lunatic economic philosophy. You know, Dougie, when I look at that Tory cabinet — Keith Joseph, Margaret Thatcher etc — I wonder whether we've been a bit hasty in opposing hanging. Maybe there are special cases!

Dougie Bain is Glasgow Area Secretary of the Communist Party

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Anyway, I think the shipbuilding struggle is also important because it's typical of all the problems that face workers in effectively developing resistance to job cuts and closures. It's all there for us to overcome.

I don't need to tell you about the problem of the redundancy payments. And they'll be offering enhanced payments now to seduce the workers and make it as hard as possible for us to win. Workers who have lived from hand to mouth all their lives will have a bob or two in their pockets; 'you'll never be poor again' and so on. And it's not an easy one. I've heard people preaching at them: it's not your job your selling, it's your children's jobs. Well I'm not going to pontificate at them because I know it's hard for workers.

And then there is the drip, drip of the media: 'There *is* no work. Everybody's in the same boat. What can you do? You cannae keep a guy on if there's no work' and so on. So not only workers but whole communities are indoctrinated. Redundancies and closures are inevitable. It's just a matter of time. So the sooner you get the boot in the balls the better — the waiting's over.

But I believe we can win. There is no other section of workers — with the exception of the miners, maybe — better equipped to fight. A long history and tradition behind them; long time unionised and well organised. A community of workers that's part of a community. But it will take nerve and good leadership.

And if we win, the repercussions will be enormous. Workers will have faced up to their responsibilities in full. After all the defeats we will have won a major victory. It will be a body blow to government strategy. And workers will learn the lesson: that if you organise and fight, you can win even against all the odds — and unless workers are won to fight, then the alternative strategy means nothing. Workers can change things if they fight — that's lesson no. 1 of the alternative strategy.

In thinking about the struggle ahead, an obvious point of reference will inevitably be the historic UCS struggle in 1971 when the Heath government tried to dismember and destroy the industry here on the Clyde. How does the situation compare today?

Well, of course, the big difference is that then there was plenty of work, relatively speaking. This time, there's none. That's the central difference. The main thing we were up against then was a doctrinaire government with its 'lame duck' philosophy. And it soon became obvious that the Tories hadn't really thought through their strategy. They were taken aback at the span of the struggle; the ability of the workers to mount what was essentially a political struggle. So things became impossible for them and they had to back down.

With the world wide recession in shipbuilding, the argument is more difficult this time. And of course the Tories have learned a thing or two as well. They know this time what to expect and they will prepare accordingly. Sometimes we think it's just us that have to learn from mistakes but the ruling class learns as well. Reaction never sleeps.

But, as you see, there's a deeper problem. At one time no British government would ever have even contemplated moving away from the commitment to full employment. But that's changed. We've been conditioned to accept the idea that high unemployment is normal. In fact the really big jumps in unemployment came under Labour governments and the Tories, if you like, just took it from there. And it isn't just a question of *one* problem. For the first time really, things are getting worse instead of better. So problems multiply and things begin to build up for workers and you get the reaction: 'when the time comes, I'm fuckin' this lot up'. I know that's a crude way of expressing it but that's how they would see it.

But even so, I believe the feeling is still there that won us through in 1972; they haven't destroyed it.

At one time no British government would ever have even contemplated moving away from the commitment to full employment.

The 'work-in' tactic was used very effectively in the UCS struggle both to hold the workforce together and in appealing to the sympathies of the public at large. From what you say about the lack of orders, obviously it's not appropriate this time. How important to the struggle is the 'lock-in' of Polish ships?

It's of limited value. It was only intended to have a limited effect. By announcing that the Polish ships would be quarantined, the stewards were giving notice to British Shipbuilders that they were in for a fight. It helped to unite the yards. The fact that the workers had leant over backwards to get these ships finished on time gave an extra punch to the tactic. It puts British Shipbuilders on the defensive. It embarrasses them. It gives them another headache to worry about.

One of the striking features of the UCS struggle was the extent to which support was won far beyond the bounds of the trade union movement. Do you think that kind of support will be forthcoming this time?

To be truthful, I think the situation is less favourable in that respect. Shipbuilding isn't the only problem facing people; we've had a whole string of closures — some of them without a blow being struck. You know what they say: every victory reveals a new frontier — well, every defeat reveals more people down in the dumps! So you get a climate of opinion that closures and redundancies are inevitable. Unemployment is the order of the day and, anyway, 'it isn't too bad; after all they'll get £5,000 and I wish I was getting £5,000' and so on and so on.

And on top of that there's the cuts in social services, prices spiralling, the big cities are being run down — so we're not the only problem.

But, of course, the support we got last time didn't just come out of the blue — we had to fight for it and I can tell you that Communist leadership was a big factor there. If there was one lesson for the working class movement that came out of the UCS struggle it was that building a broad alliance is absolutely basic to mass struggle. So whether we get the support again this time will depend on the kind of fight the shipbuilding workers put up, the level of solidarity from the movement, and the quality of the leadership.

International solidarity was another much quoted aspect of the UCS struggle. How important will it be in the current battle — and here I'm thinking particularly of the European Metal Workers.

I think it's peripheral. I know there's a lot of talk about organising at a European level — forming a front with the European Metal Workers. But I believe that the Lord helps them that first help themselves. The key to the fight will be what happens here in Britain, because I believe we are the best organised shipbuilding workers in the world. European unions for historical reasons are at a different stage of development. So if British shipbuilding workers give the lead, the rest will follow — and I'm not being chauvinist when I say that. International support will be a bonus but only if we get the fight going here first.

Anyway, there are a number of problems in this area of things. European yards are also facing an acute shortage of orders at the present time. Now I don't want to be accused of narrow nationalism here, Dougie, but if there has to be cuts — and I'm not saying there

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necessarily has to be — but if there has to be, then I'm arguing that these cuts shouldn't be made in Britain. What we're talking about here is a long established basic industry with whole communities that have historically grown up around them; but it's really only in the past decade, for instance, that the Spanish shipbuilding industry has arrived on the scene. There have already been massive cuts in our industry so — if you like — we've done our bit. On top of that, of course, is the fact that many of these foreign yards have been building British ships and we're for British ships being built in British yards.

What we're talking about here is a long established basic industry with whole communities that have historically grown up around them

Another argument that's become fashionable is that our highly sophisticated, technological economy shouldn't be producing ships — we should leave that to the developing third world nations like Korea. Heavy engineering is absolutely basic to the British economy and shipbuilding is an essential element in that heavy manufacturing base not only in absorbing manufactured goods but in creating industrial skills and so on. If you take out shipbuilding, you throw the whole economy out of balance. So it's central to any alternative economic policy.

But there's a wider argument that's got to be taken into account. Britain's an island. Building our own ships to carry our goods in and out of the country is vital if we want an independent foreign policy. To destroy our shipbuilding capacity puts us at the mercy of a third party and is tantamount to treason, in my view. And I say that as a Communist. I'm for an independent foreign policy. That's why I want Britain out of the Common Market. Let's get our own house in order and then questions of international solidarity become less complicated.

When the UCS battle was fought out, the industry was in private hands. It has since been nationalised. Do you think that will strengthen the fight now to save the yards?

Let's put it this way: but for nationalisation there probably wouldn't be a merchant shipbuilding industry today. Maybe if it had been nationalised ten years ago, we wouldn't be in the mess we are now. We talk about nationalisation as a victory for the working class — and in an important sense it was — but if it hadn't been nationalised when it was, nobody would have kicked up more than the owners. The industry had been bled white; the bottom was out of the market and they knew it.

So it was nationalised at the worst possible point in time. Right at the height of its crisis. Its best days behind it. And that leaves us with a problem. Workers who have always known full employment and plenty of overtime now face the collapse of the industry. Wars and rumours of wars — that's all it's been since nationalisation. So they look over their shoulders to the 'good, old days', when Lithgow and Swan Hunter 'looked after' them — 'oh, aye, they knew how to run a business and get orders' and so on it goes. It's all very well sloganising; but workers judge things practically not ideologically and nationalisation hasn't exactly come like manna from heaven.

Naturally, the Tories don't miss a trick. With one stone they can kill off a 'lame duck' and at the same time prove that nationalisation always leads to disaster. They can use nationalisation as an advert against itself. That's why they slip in the one about de-nationalising Yarrows — a lifeline to the workers with the compliments of Private Enterprise.

What I'm saying is that nationalisation hasn't necessarily led to a heightened socialist consciousness, but that, without it, we probably wouldn't have an industry to fight for.

But what about the question of Yarrows — do you think it could become a divisive factor in the struggle?

Some of the Confed officials have been arguing that this is a key challenge and that we must concentrate on it. In my view it's a red herring. At this stage it doesn't matter a monkey's. The only thing that matters here and now is to win the battle on the closures and redundancies. If we can do that, the Yarrows threat will be killed stone dead. It would only become a problem in the context of a defeat for the overall strategy of the workers when their unity had been fractured.

Has the role of management changed appreciably with nationalisation and what kind of role will they play in the struggle?

Management are our allies in this struggle and will remain so if they are approached and handled in the correct way. As Marx pointed out eventually the capitalist class comes to alienate the very classes they rely on for their salvation. These lads who are managers, technicians and the like are seeing their future disappear. Maybe they're not completely convinced about our strategy and, let's face it, who's fault is that? Maybe ours. Maybe we don't pose it in the right way because we're still sectarian. These are all problems we have to think more about in terms of building a broad democratic alliance.

But when the chips are down, it's the workers who will be decisive and it would probably be true to say that the managers are only a factor in a winning struggle.

I was listening the other night to an interview with Ian Farningham, one of the top executives in British Shipbuilders, and he prefaced certain remarks he was making with 'Much as I admire the tactics of the Govan Shop Stewards . . .'. It does seem that over the period since the UCS the Govan Shop Stewards Committee has matured politically, overcoming problems of sectionalism and restrictive practices, setting aside traditional demarcation rules to ensure the Polish order would be completed on time, offering to work during the holiday period, always projecting the welfare of the industry as a whole to an extent that you, as convenor, and now Sammy Gilmore, have come to be recognised as the spokesmen for the industry. How conscious a strategy was this?

Oh, it was conscious, all right. We knew we had an ideological battle to win not only for the workers, but in relation to the public at large.

What was the main argument used against us in the past? That we were an inefficient industry always late with orders. An industry bedevilled with Victorian work practices; stupid demarcation battles; fraticidal union disputes. It wasn't trade unionism — it was tribalism! It wasn't an easy battle for these problems have deep roots. We had to convince the workers that change was necessary for the sake of unity and to secure the future of shipbuilding. The stewards made that breakthrough and established a new concept in the minds of the workforce — that it was *their* industry; *their* responsibility; and that its future was in *their* hands. Where else has such a position been achieved? Where else do shop stewards speak for an industry and not the management? We had a policy. We knew where we were going. It was our policies that became the policies of the Confed and even the European Metal Workers Union.

And what does it all add up to? We're not on the defensive any more! We're pointing the way for shipbuilding. Management has

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fallen in behind us. We can make the appeal, over the heads of the workforce, to the populace as a whole. Surely, that's what building the broad democratic alliance is all about.

I know that the British trade union movement is one of the oldest, strongest and best organised — but, by Christ, its also one hell of a stupid movement! How many unions to build a ship, a plane, a motor car? It maybe made sense in 1860 but it doesn't make any sense now! The press snipe away about 'too many unions' but who's against amalgamation basically? The employers and those in the trade union leadership who care more about their careers than the interests of the working class.

Oh, yes, it was a conscious strategy and I'm convinced that the labour movement has lessons to learn from what the Govan stewards have done.

How important to shipbuilding workers is the current engineering claim? Will there be any problems in fighting on two fronts as it were?

The claim is very important, although it should be said that in Govan we have already won the position on the £80. Mind you, the way the prices are going, there won't be much change left at the end of the week!

But for five years it's been swallow this and swallow that with the social contract and so on. After a while it begins to seep through the whole movement.

But for five years it's been swallow this and swallow that with the social contract and so on. After a while it begins to seep through the whole movement. If we could get a really strong lead from the unions involved, we could put the employers in a box with no room to manouevre. This is a key fight for the bosses and the Government because they know what's at stake. If two million engineers in action can inflict a defeat on the engineering employers it would constitute a body blow to the Thatcher government which would consequently weaken their position. That could only be good news for shipbuilding workers in the struggle.

For shipbuilding workers there's no contradiction. A victory would give a real boost in confidence not just to shipyard workers but to the whole movement and the political climate would begin to change. Success breeds success. If we win on the claim we're more likely to win on the closures and redundancies.

OK. I accept that. But maybe we could pursue this one a bit farther. What's facing us here on the Clyde is deindustrialisation on a massive scale. Beyond that the threat to jobs from unplanned technological innovation is incalculable. To date we have not been too successful in resisting these pressures and you have already indicated some of the problems we have to overcome. Traditionally we have put the priority on the wages fight and seen it as the cutting edge of our political and ideological work in the movement. Do you think we need to look again at the priorities within our overall strategy?

No, I think wages is still the key to the struggle. If workers are not satisfied with their wages, you'll not get them to fight for their jobs — they'll say the job isn't worth fighting for. You can't separate jobs and wages because mass unemployment is the other side of the coin to incomes policy. They're tied together.

But if you're asking me about winning people to a broad democratic alliance; to support an alternative economic strategy then in my view jobs is the key, not wages. The wages issue can be confusing and divisive. You know the kind of argument: 'why should they get £100? Look at the old age pensioners . . .' Or think of the reaction from the public to strikes affecting the social services. Or all the hassle about differentials and parity disputes. It's a complicated one.

But when you're talking about jobs, you're talking about human dignity, the right to useful employment, the right of communities not to become ghettos, the right of youth for a future, the United Nations Charter — you can fling in the lot! It's a moral issue as well as an economic one.

And in another sense it's more fundamental. On wages, well, you win some, you lose some. Maybe you picked the wrong issue at the wrong time in the wrong place. Then again the boss might add it up and decide it's cheaper to pay up. But it won't be the end of the world — he'll still be there next time. But talk to him about jobs and manning and about having a say in what's going to happen to you — **and he'll fight like hell! It's more fundamental.**

So, what I'm saying is — wages is the key to struggle. It's what workers work for and it's what they'll always fight for. But in winning allies, building a broad democratic alliance, jobs will be the key. That was the lesson of the UCS. And there are a lot of other issues that are now becoming priorities in people's minds — urban decline and deprivation, the environment, the nuclear question, in fact the whole quality of life. We've got to take these issues on board as well if we are going to win allies and create a socialist consciousness.

But if you're right about jobs being ideologically a more loaded issue than wages, then it will have significance not only in winning broad support but also in its impact on the workers themselves who are fighting for jobs. The UCS, of course, was not about wages but about jobs and the stewards were, of necessity, involved in a highly ideological and tactical struggle making the argument for work as a basic human right, why Britain needs a shipbuilding industry, and so on. Do you think, as a result of that experience and others before it, that shipyard workers on the Clyde have some understanding of the Left's alternative economic strategy. The point I'm trying to get at here is that it seems to me that the alternative strategy is still very much the property of union conferences and is confined to the leading sections of the movement. Maybe we need to think more about how it will become the property of, at least, the leading sections of the workers. Do you have any thoughts on this?

I think shipyard workers are really much the same as other workers. They're just as susceptible to the media. Their thought processes are no different from the society they live in. They might have a go now and then but basically they accept the capitalist system — it's the best we've got and it's better than socialism because they don't have any freedom over there and so on. So if you're asking me if they see a socialist solution to their problems, then the answer is, in my opinion, no.

So what have they learned? Where are they at? Well they know they can change the status quo if they take things into their own hands — that they can win. And it's when workers challenge the status quo and win that they learn the most. Maybe even more important, they know there has to be a certain approach — that they have to win allies in their struggle. OK, they're not socialists but they have a respect for Communist leadership — and not just for the Reids and the Airlies and the other so-called folk heroes, although I've got as big an ego as the next man. Shipyard workers have a loyalty to the industry and a feeling for it. They have a loyalty to their shop stewards so they'll say, fuck it, we're going to fight because that's what we've been asked to do and we're loyal. I'm being frank with you, Dougie. That's the reality.

The alternative economic strategy? Well, it's still you and me that talk in these terms and I'm not being elitist — just realistic. But it's the basis of our struggle and our argumentation so in the long run it all comes together.

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Moving on, could you say something about the shipbuilding branch of the Communist Party and its role in the struggle?

The shipbuilding branch covers the three Glasgow yards — Govan, Scotstoun Marine and Yarrows, as you know.

The role of the branch? Absolutely vital to the struggle. And I'm not talking in the usual cliches here. I don't see the Party as a totem pole or a flag. The fact is that the branch has by and large provided the leadership of the shop stewards committees over the past decade at least. So I'm talking about real mass influence — something that's maybe unique — I don't know.

But that can bring its own problems as well. Sometimes people are critical because being in the leadership of the stewards, there's not enough consultation and discussion with the branch. That can become a problem, if you don't mind me saying so. I'll explain it to you. I think it's got to be said. You see there can be a strategy worked out by the leadership — of the stewards, I mean — and there can be problems if it's immediately taken into the branch and discussed. It's not being secretive, but, well, the shipbuilding comrades are not always . . . it's difficult to put this, Dougie . . . not always aware of the subtleties of a particular strategy. But it gets sorted out in the end.

But, despite what you've said, the point has to be made that there hasn't been a growth of the branch for a number of years — although that's not peculiar to your branch. How do you think the work of the branch could be improved — or indeed the industrial and political work of the Glasgow Party?

Dougie. Can I make a point here? We really are soul-searching and tearing ourselves apart for nothing! You say there hasn't been a growth — maybe even a decline. What are we? 90 members? But I'll argue that the authority, the status, the influence and the standing of the Party has never at any time been greater than it is today in the shipbuilding industry. I'll argue that objectively. The Party is acceptable, respectable — and I don't want that word put in inverted commas.

So what are we saying? The workers have fled the revolution? We cannae see it in that way! I happen to believe that workers are, by and large, not joiners of parties. How many of them are joining the Labour Party or the SNP? Oh, aye, they'll vote for them — we haven't broken that one — but how many of them are joining these parties?

I'm for the perspective of a mass Party, but it's just not there at present. In fact I would question whether the Labour Party is either in any real sense of the word. For them it's all about manoeuvring and positions. I'm not being a salvationist here — 'save me from the sin that's touching all!' — but that's how they are. Labour Party membership is falling. There's a new cynicism. It's not surprising our membership is down and it's not unique to the Party. Thousands of people can stand back and broadly view the philosophy and policy of the Communist Party but they still won't vote and they still won't join. I don't believe a Communist government is round the corner. You don't believe it. So we can't blame them if they don't see it either.

We've got to get away from the Band of Hope outlook: 'how many souls still to be saved?' I was dying and the *Morning Star* saved me! The Party is finding its level under present conditions and unfortunately it's a decline. In a sense we have to accept it.

In one way it's a good thing — and you can erase this bit if you like — but we have also been getting rid of a load of bam-pots in the process. People who, in my view, are just not suited psychologically for life in general, who always have to be in opposition. So when they saw the Party sliding into 'revisionism' they hopped it to the Trots or the NCP or what have you. I've never just been against things. I've always wanted to be in the mainstream of life where Communists ought to be.

Coming back to the Labour Party for a moment. One of the Labour lefts — I think it was Eric Heffer — recently argued for factory branches of the Labour Party to be set up. How would you view a shipbuilding branch of the Labour Party?

We would welcome it. The shipbuilding branch of the Communist Party would welcome it.

Mind you I very much doubt if any of them would know how to go about it, but I'm very much encouraged that they're talking about it. In my view, the Labour Party isn't a political party in the same sense that the Communist Party is. There's a very big difference. The Labour Party has always been an electoral machine, a ladder to the top. I think there is a danger that it could degenerate even further. And it isn't just a question of making Tony Benn leader or even of democratising the Party although I completely support those that are trying to bring about changes. It's also about action, struggle. Factory branches would bring the Labour Party more into touch with the workers and with the Left including the Communist Party. It would make them face up to the issues.

I think the leadership of the Labour Party and the Parliamentary Party in particular would oppose the idea. The right wing in the movement would oppose it.

It could help the Communist Party by opening up debate and discussion. We're not afraid of discussion. We thrive on it. So I'm for Labour factory branches.

A final question, Jimmy. You've recently been elected as AUEW Divisional Organiser for Glasgow — one of the few Left victories. How do you view the prospects for extending and developing left unity, particularly here in Glasgow?

I want first of all to say that I have always held that the development of left unity is fundamental to the advance of the working class movement. Never was there a time when it was more important to bury niggling differences for the sake of a broad unity of the left.

I think the prospects are very good. In many regards, Scotland is, and has been for some time, in the forefront of left and progressive developments. The struggle of the shipbuilding workers, the role of the miners, the result of the General Election, the devolution fight and so on. All this is reflected in the steady shift to the left in the STUC over recent years.

We're now moving into an anti-Tory struggle. Scotland will be in the frontline there because Thatcher has no mandate for her policies north of the Tweed. What I'm arguing is the unity won't come out of smoke filled rooms — it will grow out of struggle and struggle is what we're likely to get plenty of!

The Communist Party is the Party that's best equipped for the job of building unity. I don't mean that we should dominate other organisations because that's never been our aim but nor should we be subservient either. There are and there will be differences. These have got to be discussed. But they shouldn't be an obstacle to the kind of broad unity we need — the broad democratic alliance.

I've made the point already — I've never accepted us playing the numbers game pure and simple. It doesn't worry me that we were 30,000 ten years ago and that we're 22,000 now. But what does matter is that we have a mass attitude. That's what will lay the basis for unity and for a bigger Communist Party. And let's be clear — I'm for a much bigger Party!

But there's nothing easier than talking about left unity. We're all experts at talking about it. Let's put it on the ground in the fight to save the yards and the jobs of the shipbuilding workers. □

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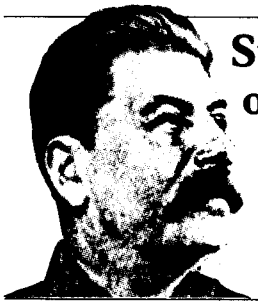

Stalin played a massively important role in the transformation of the Soviet Union. How to assess his contribution?

Stalin - a centenary view

Joseph Stalin was born on 21 December 1879, the son of a shoemaker and former serf. During his life he participated in the greatest events of the twentieth century, rising to become the head of a new world power, the first socialist country. He died at the age of seventy three on 5 March 1953.

For Communists to establish Stalin's place in history will never be easy. Firstly, Stalin was a great man, but great individuals are not easy to place within a materialistic conception of history. We are used to history as the business of masses, classes, parties and institutions. Sometimes it is tempting to picture Stalin as the mere embodiment of impersonal 'historic' forces. But Stalin was more than this. The forces which created him and his place in history were often sharply personal and individual, although the individuals were many and we do not know all their names. In addition Stalin personally influenced the development and transformation of his own basis in society.

Equally we should not ignore the social forces and reduce it all to the deeds or misdeeds of a great man. Stalin was a great man, but it was not his personal capacity for good or evil which made him so. He acted within a social context which created space for him, and which actively responded to him. Therefore, I hope it is clear that I don't see my task in a biographical way, and that our subject must be broader than Stalin the individual. Others can write with greater authority of Stalin's daily life, his personal relations and moral attributes. I consider my real subject the relationship of the individual to society, which in Stalin's case we know as Stalinism.

Consequently I do not use the word 'Stalinism' to refer just to Stalin's morality or intellectual outlook. The reader will find the word applied below to conceptions, models, practices and institutions embracing every level of society. What these have in common is that they are all involved in the many-sided, two-way relationship between Stalin the individual and fundamental social forces, especially the Soviet working class.

There is also a second reason why it is difficult for Communists to establish Stalin's place in history. It is our history too. Marx once wrote that 'Men make their own history', but they are also controlled by it; in the process of struggling to change the world, they are drawn for security and legitimacy back to 'the spirits of the past', borrowing from them 'names, battle cries and costumes in order to present the new scene of world history in this time-honoured disguise . . .'[1]. The figure of Stalin still provides the terms of reference for many of today's battles; we often engage in the struggle for a new tomorrow as though its real purpose is to confirm or revise the outcome of battles fought to a conclusion thirty and forty years ago.

In reality the verdicts of these past battles, and the resulting course taken by world history, are unalterable facts which can no longer be revised. My purpose is not to revise these events. My purpose is rather to reconsider the substance of the original alternatives and the circumstances and results of the choices between them. Without this knowledge we cannot grasp how these unalterable facts may affect us and how our own history may influence our choices in the revolutionary struggles of the present and future.

It is appropriate to start by looking for Stalinism's historical roots. We do not have to start from scratch, since there are two ready-made solutions. In the view which carries most popular conviction, we see the October 1917 revolution dominated by historical continuity — the essential thread which runs from Ivan the Terrible and Peter the Great to Lenin and Stalin. In this first view the Bolsheviks reproduced everything, revolutionised nothing.[2] The second view, based in a Marxist awareness of history as a process of change, discontinuity and the emergence of new phenomena, was clearly stated by the late John Gollan in his reassessment of the Twentieth CPSU Congress: Bolshevism broke with the institutions and traditions of despotic rule, but Lenin died and Stalin departed from Lenin's principles.[3] Each of these views contains important elements of truth, but neither tells the whole story.

Where did Stalinism come from?

Every revolutionary movement must solve in its own way the problem of how to revolutionise society, by means which do not reproduce the most hateful and oppressive structures of the old order. In Russia this historic problem was particularly acute. The liberal bourgeoisie proved itself unable to overturn military absolutism and its feudal foundations, since it depended for its own regulation and safety upon bureaucrats and Cossack troops. Of the revolutionary movement, the terrorist wing (the populists and anarchists) found that its actions only accentuated the police rule of the Tsarist state. The Bolsheviks had a real revolutionary inspiration rooted in mass politics; they would revolutionise society. However in doing so they also replicated certain structures of the old order. I shall argue that the heritage of the October 1917 revolution was contradictory; Lenin left an ambiguous testament. Stalin was able to build upon institutions and practices which already existed, which the Bolsheviks had taken over or recreated from the past.

As is well known, the Bolsheviks took power on the basis of a limited programme: Peace, Land, Bread. These demands were the focus of their active, mass majority support in October 1917. There did not exist a majority for socialism, nor did the Bolsheviks of 1917 have a strategy for achieving it. All of them without exception (not just Trotsky and his adherents) depended on illusions concerning the speed of approach of the Western socialist revolution which alone would yield the material and political conditions for socialism in backward Russia. The Bolsheviks had little inkling of a nationally based road to socialism initiated by the actually existing minority working class, with the active participation of the vast, far-flung peasantry, in the conditions resulting from the failure of the Western revolution. Their perspective on the socialist reorganisation of society was not strategic and practical, but abstract and theoretical.

Their experience of revolutionary struggle did not greatly illuminate this problem. How could it? The conditions of struggle against

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1. 'The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte', in Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *Selected Works*, London 1968, p. 96. Writing in a previous age, the founder of the theory of practice used the word 'men' to include women.

2. See for example the centenary articles by Edward Crankshaw carried in *The Observer*, 20 and 27 May 1979.

3. 'Socialist Democracy: Some Problems'. *Marxism Today*, January 1976.

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the Tsarist police state did not permit national, popular and democratic aspirations to develop much beyond very simple dreams and longings, or to take developed practical forms. They did not allow the Bolsheviks to accumulate the experience of a collective, conscious everyday practice of resolving the old society's productive and reproductive problems by new, democratic methods. The new society could not be pre-figured within the old as a living alternative, except through very basic relations of solidarity in opposition to tyranny and the degradation of labour, where men and women came together and called each other 'brother', 'sister' and 'comrade'.

What living experience did inform the long-range objectives of Bolshevism? We find this, not in any positive, practically developed conception of a socialist community of the future, but in a socialism portrayed as the negative of capitalism, a mirror image of the actually existing everyday life. The Russian capitalism which formed this everyday life was a violently contradictory productive system, dynamically growing but in irrational and destructive ways. It reproduced capital at the expense of the physical and social destruction of the working class it had created — in the factory through harmful conditions of work, and in the squalor of the urban environment; in the village by ruining the poor, parting their families and pushing them into the market for migrant labour; finally, in the trenches of imperialist war. This living experience of capitalism's productive anarchy emerged in the narrow conception of socialism as mainly a system of rational, planned production of things, and of the efficient management of human resources as a moral value in itself.[4] By contrast the impulse towards shop-floor democracy which came from Russian syndicalism formed only a weak, subordinate component of Bolshevik politics.

Force and Consent

The experience of political struggle within Tsarism also powerfully influenced the Bolshevik conception of class rule. The Bolsheviks sought to establish a form of rule by the working class which combined consent (of the majority formed by the workers and peasants) with force (exercised against the minority of exploiters): this was what Lenin meant by the 'dictatorship of the proletariat'[5]. Revolution, even violent revolution, combines with the compulsory winding up of the old regime a supreme act of consent — the old regime is willed away by the masses, without whose permission nothing is possible. But force and consent rarely exist as equal partners, except momentarily. Over a period of time, one must predominate. Forming the first Soviet government, the Bolsheviks had to handle ready made institutions of coercive rule (the secret police, the censorship, etc) which they were able rapidly to restore to life when the occasion demanded it. What was there to form the counterweight of democratic supervision? Their moral hatred of tyranny was inadequately matched by their experience and practicality. The Russian tradition of local direct democracy, which had taken shape in the village commune and urban Soviet (workers' council), generated only transitory movements of mass participation; blocked by the traditions and mechanisms of Tsarist oppression, they did not give rise to sufficiently sturdy, open representative institutions. The concept of proletarian dictatorship, with its external emphasis on coercion and the state, did not help the Bolsheviks to challenge this reality[6].

Acceptance of forcible methods of rule, generated through struggle against the Tsarist regime, was reinforced by experience of the military manoeuvrings of the 'representative' Provisional Governments of February to October 1917, the armed intervention of the Western parliamentary democracies, and the terrors and insurrections of civil war imposed by the counter-revolution. The consent of the working class to its dictatorship was organised through the Soviets' direct democracy. But the workers' collective control over the governmental apparatus was repeatedly threatened by powerful centralising forces of military and bureaucratic origin. The new Bolshevik programme of 1919, invoking the democratising spirit of the Paris Commune, called for mass participation in administration and the rotation of posts[7]. At the same time, many Bolsheviks welcomed the extreme military centralisation of the civil war state and economy as steps towards the rationally planned socialist production unit[8].

The Bolshevik Party

The Bolshevik party itself was a product of these struggles. It waged its own struggle to combine the centralised disciplines necessary to revolutionary politics with internal democracy and the interplay of differing values[9]. In practice many of its organisational features were neither centralised nor democratic. There existed major disparities of policy and practice between different regional organisations, and between leaders in the field and the leadership in exile, even over crucial issues like relations with the Mensheviks. A noticeable division of labour evolved between philosophers and practitioners. After the revolution these acquired much greater significance because they were compounded by divisions over the correct road to socialism — the abstract problems had become concrete, and this exposed the Bolsheviks' lack of unity over fundamental moral and practical values.

What were the sources of Bolshevism's integrity and effectiveness? Partly the Party was held together by its structures of representation and discipline. But these alone were not enough. What directed the Party, giving it both consensus and dynamism, was a unique force: a force which operated within its hierarchies at the same time as it manoeuvred outside, between and sometimes even against its official organisations. This force, essential to Bolshevism, was its leader Lenin. He integrated its factions and functions, enabled it to combine theory with practice, pragmatism with a moral dream, a Trotsky with a Bukharin, a Kollontai, a Zinoviev and a Stalin among its cadres. To achieve this he manoeuvred and factionalised, seeking consensus but also ready at critical moments to make his appeal as a personal leader to the rank and file against its Central Committee and threaten resignation to get his way. He played this role outstandingly in the most critical period from April 1917 to the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk, directing the Party, dividing it against itself and uniting it on new courses.

Why did Stalin succeed Lenin?

From the conditions of its birth, Bolshevism already contained essential elements upon which Stalin would build. There were also opposing elements which he would suppress. When Lenin died on 24 January 1924 he left a heritage containing several contradictory,

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4. In Western Europe under conditions of more successful capitalist development, subordinacy before the needs of the rational organisation of production took the alternative historical form of reformist Social Democracy.

5. 'The State and Revolution', in *Selected Works*, Vol. 2, Moscow 1967, Ch. V.

6. From this viewpoint Lenin's 'dictatorship of the proletariat' can be seen as a system of class power in which force is combined with consent, but force predominates through the coercive state. Correspondingly, Gramsci's 'hegemony' can be taken to mean a system of class power in which force is combined with consent, but consent predominates through civil society.

7. *Vos'moi s"ezd RKP(B)*, Moscow 1933, p. 397.

8. This is documented by Laszlo Szamuely, *First Models of the Socialist Economic Systems*, Budapest 1974, Chs. 1 and 2.

9. See Monty Johnstone, 'Socialism, Democracy and the One Party System', *Marxism Today*, August 1970.

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alternative futures, of which only one could be fully realised. These alternatives are reflected in the ensuing struggle within the Bolshevik party, from which Stalin emerged the victor. Stalin succeeded to the position vacated by Lenin for two reasons. Firstly, in April 1922 he had been appointed General Secretary to the Bolshevik Central Committee, and from this initially obscure office he acquired responsibility for the organisation of the whole party-state bureaucracy. But possession of the office alone was not sufficient. The second reason is that from his office Stalin was able to organise a unique relationship to working class politics, which enabled him to intervene at critical moments in the struggle between more brilliant intellectuals.

What were the substantive issues in the struggle over the road to be followed? On one side we find a current in Bolshevism which has learnt from history. In 1920 Bukharin is advocating 'shooting and labour conscription' as methods of creating a new Communist humanity. By 1922 he understands that it is not so simple. The problem of bureaucracy has become central to Bolshevik discussion; in his last writings Lenin starts to pose the need to transform the bureaucratic traditions of the Russian people through a voluntary, cooperative road to socialism[10]. Bukharin picks up these ideas. He does not reject the proletarian dictatorship, the one-party state, or the possession of the economy's 'commanding heights'. But he starts to combine with these, ideas about rural community development, cultural revolution from below, and the project of building a Soviet 'civil society'. He assigns to these ideas an essentially democratic significance: class struggle against the two anti-democratic cultures of feudal bureaucracy and of kulak capitalism, finding new, democratic solutions to productive tasks[11]. At this stage, Stalin appears as Bukharin's ally and supporter.

These ideas were given force by their relationship to actually existing structures, especially the New Economic Policy introduced in March 1921. The military centralisation of the civil war period, indispensable to military victory over the White armies, now gave rise to boiling social tensions and proved unable to sustain economic life. Food shortages and the threat of new peasant insurrections compelled measures of decentralisation and relaxed controls on trade. Under the New Economic Policy elements of private and group initiative were restored both in the economy and in culture through new relations of pluralism and exchange — subject to the Bolshevik monopoly of the 'commanding heights'. In this unnerving period, controls on political organisation of both Bolsheviks and non-Bolsheviks were increased rather than lessened. But in society's grass roots space was being made for new cooperative and democratic institutions which never before existed.

The Alternatives

Could they be brought into being? Opposing perspectives also existed. On the Left wing of the Bolsheviks, fears generated by foreign encirclement and domestic insurgency gave shape to a different model of the future. The essence of this model was forced industrialisation, in order to raise Soviet industry to a level where it could compete with the Western economies and resist them militarily. By repressing agriculture and living standards, Soviet society could be pulled up from its grass roots, transformed from a predominantly agrarian configuration with its myriad peasant bases for discontent and resistance, to a productive unit where all the peasants became workers, subject to industrial disciplines. The 'social engineers' such as Feldman, Preobrazhensky and Pyatakov inherited the conception of socialism mainly as a system of rational, planned production of things. This found political echoes in Trotsky's obsession with discipline: discipline over work, discipline over the market place, discipline over consumption. Only inside the Party where they were the victims of discipline did the Left oppositionists advocate relaxation.

The conflict between the strategy of developing rural civil society and popular democratic control from below, and the strategy of forced industrialisation organised from above, was mediated through several forms and stages. With Lenin's death it took the form of a struggle for personal power. The first object of struggle between the contenders was Lenin's mantle, and the first casualty was Trotsky. It was Stalin who coined the 'Leninist' doctrine of the possibility of building socialism in a single country, independently of the world revolution. Trotsky, it was held, believed this project to be impossible. Therefore Trotsky was ruled out as Lenin's heir; he had not inherited Leninism, but was held to have founded Trotskyism — an alien doctrine. Thus 'Leninism', a consistent body of doctrine purged of contradictory and historically specific elements in Lenin's thought, was produced after Lenin's death in the course of Stalin's struggle for power.

Of course, the possibility of building socialism in a single country is strictly a philosophical issue: it sealed Trotsky's fate, but did not predetermine the practical steps to be followed in terms of policy. Trotsky himself did not believe it was impossible to start building socialism in the USSR alone, only to complete it. The practical issue was: which road to socialism?

10. *Last Letters and Articles*, Moscow 1964. But at the same time Lenin was impatiently urging the integration of the institutions of anti-bureaucratic control — the Party's Central Control Commission and the state Workers' and Peasants' Inspection — into a single centralised party-state bureaucracy.

11. See his articles in *Bolshevik*, No. 2 and No. 7-8, 1924. Recent reassessments of Bukharin's contribution to Marxism as practical theory include Stephen F. Cohen, *Bukharin and the Bolshevik Revolution*, New York 1973, and Moshe Lewin, *Political Undercurrents in Soviet Economic Debates*, London 1975.

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The choice outlined above was between the road of rural community development and gradual, balanced economic growth, and the Left alternative of rapid, forced industrialisation. The outcome of the struggle was that in December 1927, at the Fifteenth Party Congress, the Left opposition (including Trotsky and Zinoviev) was drummed out of the Party. The apparent victor was Bukharin, his ideas and arguments backed by Stalin and the weight of the Party machine. The real victor, however, was Stalin himself, who next turned upon Bukharin and his adherents, forcing them to surrender to the same coercive, industrialising programme which the defeated Left had developed. Behind this lay two facts. The first fact was the inherent fragility of consensual politics in the Soviet context. The second fact was that Stalin, unlike his opponents on both Right and Left, had developed an organic relationship with the Soviet working class through the party-state complex which he directed from his office.

Politics of subordinacy

This relationship is something which I call the 'politics of subordinacy'. Subordinacy meant the retreat of the working class from directly exercised political power. In October 1917 it had constituted itself as the ruling class through the direct democracy of the Soviets. In the following years it beat a retreat. The power struggle between the individual leaders was just a symptom of this, corresponding to the ascent of authority in the Party, trade unions and Soviets away from the rank and file to the leadership. Increasingly political battles were settled by factional struggles and bureaucratic representations beyond the public gaze[12]. Those currents of struggle which found roots in the mass mood — for example the Left militancy of the Leningrad opposition — were dominated by oppositional demagogy, and depended upon their grip in the Party machine, perishing as soon as it was lost. The Left wrongly thought that it had been defeated because Bukharin's arguments had captured Stalin's bureaucracy. But the real architect of their defeat was Stalin, upon whom Bukharin had come to depend. Through his bureaucracy, the General Secretary had become the central figure in working class politics.

The retreat of the working class from directly exercised power was not a passive process (although many did not resist), nor was it crudely imposed upon the protesting masses (although many resisted). In the rise of Stalin's bureaucracy there were important relations of mass consent and mass participation which ought not to be ignored. Subordinacy did not mean indifference or passivity. While coercive at heart, Stalinism depended upon these elements of consent and participation from its birth.

Consent to Stalinism arose primarily from the working class experience of failure. The victory of 1917 had born the seeds of three or four defeats, none of them crushing but each with a special significance. Among the earliest was the defeat of the worker control movement of 1917-1918, in which the working class failed (or was not allowed) to manage production without the managerial hierarchy of discipline created by capitalism[13]. At another level the class failed to break the barriers between itself and the caste of professional intellectuals: the technical intelligentsia was at best cooperative, politically neutral and socially remote. Relations with the peasantry were another source of a growing sense of failure in the 1920s, from the bitter clashes of the civil war economy to the more subtle frustrations of the New Economic Policy. To take up the needs of the village, to give the moral and cultural leadership, to devote new resources to the struggle for rural community development was too immense a task, bringing little immediate return. The simple arithmetic of working class subsistence was too urgent; repeatedly in the 1920s wage militancy flared in the trade unions, at times becoming linked with the ideas of the opposition. Each time, real constraints came into play and the militancy collapsed. Underlying these was the defeat of illusions, especially the illusion of an imminent Western revolution to usher in the building of Utopia: in place of this dream lay the suffering and casualties of war and civil strife. The utopian dream did not fade, but was displaced into the indefinite future; each defeat strengthened the class's sense of destiny, its sense of isolation and of corporate self-interest[14]. The immediate project which it substituted was that of economic construction, the organisation of which was entrusted to its party.

At this level, therefore, the working class consented to the subordination of Soviet society to productive goals — not only the subjection of the workers themselves to new coercive disciplines, but the redirection of all other classes and strata to the needs of industrial production. From now on the development of Soviet society would be measured chiefly by its ability to educate and mobilise its human resources to produce more things.

In return, through its participation in this process, the working class subjected the bureaucracy itself to a special discipline — an intensely anti-bureaucratic outlook, valuing production alone, hateful of non-productive, faceless pen-pushers and red tape, fiercely demanding that the leaders show themselves as real people, from the people, who understood the popular needs and knew how to get things moving. In a world of flux and insecurity workers turned away from self-organisation and collective activity as a means to solving their problems, demanding a leader who was like them but also above them, to order their lives and redress their humiliations. Stalin became this leader. He alone combined in his hands the rational, impersonal authority of the party-state bureaucracy with the personal power, unregulated by any law, of 'the boss'. Ordinary people understood this combination, responding to it in their petitions to him.

In fact consent was only one element in the rise of Stalinism, being secondary to the force of new coercive institutions and Stalin's initiatives. Stalinism did not only rest on existing ideas and practices, it acted upon them and reshaped them along with Soviet society as a whole. The decisive phase of this transformation, the emergence of the Stalinist political system, was between 1929 and 1934.

What did Stalin revolutionise?

In the five years from 1929 to 1934 Soviet society was fundamentally shaken up. New industries and cities sprang into being. During the period of the first Five Year Plan alone (1928-1932) the working class more than doubled in size. Most of the new factory recruits came from the village, where equally radical change saw the forcible concentration of millions of peasant smallholdings into a new kind of enterprise, the collective farm. In the process more millions of peasants found their way not to the factory but to the zones of enforced resettlement in the North and East. Hundreds of thousands ended up in prison or in labour camps taken over or started up by the newly created GULAG. There they were joined by many professional and technical workers who had failed to accommodate their expertise to the new methods of management of production. Newly educated specialists, engineers and functionaries took their place in industry, while the new planning and labour disciplines took hold.

These few years mark out the boundary between two phases of Soviet history. The first phase lasted from 1917 to 1929. During this

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12. See for example E H Carr, *Socialism in One Country*, Pelican 1970, Vols. 1 and 2, Chs. 7, 19 and 22.

13. We do not know whether the failure of the worker control movement should be put down to its own inadequacies, or to the hostility shown to it by leading Bolsheviks including Lenin.

14. See Ken Spours, 'Marxist Theory and the Soviet Superstructure', *Socialist Europe* No. 1, p. 16.

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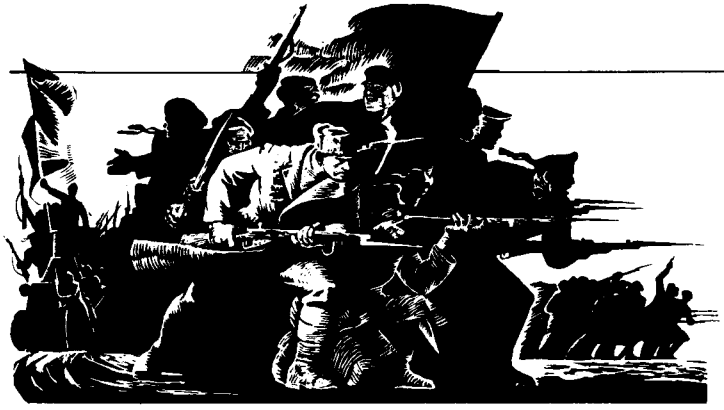

phase we find an alternation between two models of socialism. In one model socialist industry and central planning are combined with peasant farming and broad areas of private and cooperative initiative mediated through the market. The Bolshevik political monopoly is combined with elements of pluralism. Below the commanding heights lie the broad, peaceful valleys of community and civilisation. This model appears fleetingly in the turbulent moments between October 1917 and the spring of 1918; suppressed by the slide into civil war, it reappears later with the New Economic Policy and asserts itself strongly during the 1920s. In the other model the elements of consent, community and pluralism are submerged by the experience of coercive struggles and military disciplines ('shooting and labour conscription'). The dialectic between these two models marks out the main features of the first phase.

In 1929 this dialectic is broken. The break is not a result of economic necessity, but of political choice. The growing crisis of food supplies and of goods shortages is the product of a growing political commitment to a rate of industrialisation greater than the economic system of the twenties can sustain. The main constraints emerge as the market and the peasant. Rapid centralisation of the industrial economy culminates in the adoption of the first Five Year Plan and a purge of the economic and technical specialists. To ensure success in the industrialisation drive, relations of voluntary exchange with the peasantry are replaced by compulsory seizure of food products, and the collectivisation drive is launched[15]. The initiator of these changes is Stalin himself, driving Bukharin into opposition and then into surrender to his authority. The remnants of the Left are divided; Trotsky is not reconciled, but many former oppositionists accept that Stalin is now carrying out their programme of forced industrialisation.

1929, 'the Year of the Great Breakthrough', marked the opening of a new phase in Soviet history. Popular versions describe it as Stalin's 'revolution from above', even Stalin's 'counter-revolution'. While exaggerated and one-sided, these terms express the conservative aspect of this revolutionary process. In the upheaval important pre-revolutionary institutions reasserted themselves. Stalin blocked off the road towards a new civil society by reviving some of the oldest, most archaic Russian forms. These included the feudal moneyless economy subject to extra-economic coercion, the bondage to the soil of rural labour and the 'collective responsibility' of the serf community[16], the patriarchal morality of the peasant family, and the police censorship of culture. Also among these forms was the unrestrained personal power of absolutism.

Transformation of Society

In other respects Soviet society was truly revolutionised. The reactionary forms were infused with new, educating and industrialising goals — throwing off the age-old burden of agrarian backwardness and national dependence, educating children, training and protecting labour, producing new material values. In any case the resort to the old methods and institutions was pragmatic, not doctrinaire — the years of the 'Great Breakthrough' were marked by constant experiment and adaptation. Thus planning and rationing did not altogether drive out money. For industrial workers money incentives were in some ways increased. Within the collective farm elements of family based husbandry, at first suppressed, were soon restored to precarious legality. Some attempt was made to limit the freedom of action of the security forces, and even Stalin's personal power.

All the same, terror was the main method of carrying through the 'revolution from above'. Attached to it were heavy human casualties and economic losses[17]. The forced pace of industrial and agricultural change, and the accompanying hyperactivity of the political police, resulted in famine, economic setbacks and political crisis. In reaction against the use of terror we find the emergence of a current of opinion in 1933 and 1934 associated with the Leningrad party leader Kirov, which sought to regulate the exercise of force, subjecting it to law and the needs of rational administration. However this current could only assert itself temporarily. In December 1934 Kirov was assassinated (probably at Stalin's instigation)[18] and, in the hunt for the murderer's 'accomplices' Stalin cast all restraint aside. The Great Terror leading to the Moscow trials of 1937 and 1938 had begun.

In these events we can see the new dialectic which marks the second phase of Soviet history, replacing the old dialectic of force and consent broken in 1929. Stalin had brought about the decisive victory of a model of socialism primarily based in force. In the new phase and the new model, a new dialectic operated between different kinds of force. Force unrestrained by law, based in the personal power of leaders, had created the victory of the new, Stalinist model. But this terroristic form of government was a source of costly damage and waste. The alternative represented by Kirov was a system of government which, while forcible in nature, was regulated and restrained by law and the needs of rational administration. Thus the new dialectic ran between regulated force on one hand and terror on the other. Through the 1930s and 1940s we find an alternation in the predominance of one or the other model, while Stalin's personal authority rose and fell in correlation with the model of terror.

How and why did Stalinism change?

In the 1930s the Soviet working class evolved in contradictory directions. After a period of colossal upheaval, recruitment and expansion it began to demonstrate new capacities as the Stakhanov movement demonstrated on the shop floor. But in other ways the working class found its subordinacy deepened before its leaders and its state. Workers retained the institutional channels of direct access to the state which they had created in 1917, and the forms of mass participation in politics through the Soviets and socialised production.

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15. More traditional versions of these events (see Brian Pollitt, 'The Soviet Economic Debate in the Twenties'. *Marxism Today*, April 1972) see the grain shortages as resulting from peasant decisions to hoard grain, not as consequences of the political decision to force the pace of industrialisation.

16. Decrees of June and July 1929 made the private possession of grain stocks a criminal offence, and made the village community collectively responsible for the obligatory grain quotas imposed on each of its members. Yu A Moshkov, *Zernovaya problema v gody sploshnoi kollektivizatsii sel'skogo khozyaistva SSSR*, Moscow 1966, pp. 63-66, takes this to date the end of NEP.

17. Again more traditional versions (see Pollitt, *op. cit.*, p. 124) hold that the collectivisation programme encountered serious obstacles but achieved its main objectives. Recent Soviet work (A A Barsov, *Balans stoimost'nykh obmenov mezhdu gorodom i derevnei*, Moscow 1969) suggests that the problems were so great, that after collectivisation Soviet agriculture contributed less to the industrialisation programme than before.

18. Some of the evidence comes from Khrushchev's special report to the closed session of the Twentieth CPSU Congress in 1956. See N S Khrushchev, *The Secret Speech*, Nottingham 1976, p. 35. A much fuller account can be found in Roy Medvedev, *Let History Judge*, London 1972, Ch. V.

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However the character of this access and participation was blind, fragmentary and sectionalised. It was also active and real, and through such channels Soviet workers searched for solutions to their real problems. The result was the great mass mobilisations of the Stalin era, which ended sometimes in great achievements of industrial construction, urban development, education and hygiene. Sometimes the mobilisations ended in great disasters — countrywide searches for non-existent enemies in which millions eventually perished: costly failures to build upon quicksand and to achieve the impossible ahead of time; the physical loss of painstakingly accumulated resources and values.

The Stalinist bureaucracy derived its dynamism from the organic relationship of its leaders with society. Personal leaders made the spread of a coercive, bureaucratic system acceptable to the working class, appealing to its anti-bureaucratic impulses and winning its particpation. At the same time the terroristic role of the personal leaders threatened the efficient regulation of society and the rational organisation of production. Stalin, and below him many 'little Stalins', subordinated the bureaucracy to their personal rule. Stalin himself was responsible for major errors of economic and social policy, such as the counter-productive forcing of the pace of industrialisation. He used terror to settle accounts with those who crossed his path — his rivals from the 1920s, his colleagues of the 1930s who might rival his popularity and offer moderation of his policies, and their adherents. He stimulated his subordinates to commit crimes on their own account; he personally sent thousands of blameless citizens (along with his own thugs and murderers such as Yagoda and Ezhov, successive heads of the NKVD security police) to imprisonment, torture and death; he was an accessory to the similar fate of millions more. When the excesses and crimes became too heavy to be endured, he preserved his popularity by blaming his subordinates, whom he had appointed and who were carrying out his policies. As a result the terror went far beyond what was necessary to serve Stalin's personal ambition; while he manipulated it from above, it was transmitted through the bureaucracy, repeatedly resonating through society and then turning its amplified force blindly inward upon the state itself.

The War

The system of personal, unregulated power met its greatest test in the face of military fascism and the German invasion of 1941. Stalin's policies helped to create the industrial and planning infrastructure which were sufficient eventually to defeat Hitler's war machine. We cannot say whether an alternative road to socialism might have given the Soviet people better material or moral equipment to face invasion (from the military point of view, the importance of moral equipment is that it helps to determine the direction in which the material equipment will be aimed). However it is clear from the first six months of the war, until the end of 1941, that Stalin's personal rule was meeting its greatest test very badly and even failing. Stalin was personally responsible for the terrorised state of the military command, the lack of preparedness of the troops and their commitment to inappropriate military tactics[19]. The USSR only survived because, during the long retreat from the frontier of divided Poland to the gates of Leningrad and Moscow, to Stalingrad and the Caucasus, the Soviet system of military and political command was restructured.

Temporarily Stalin lost his position of absolute personal authority, and had to accept constraints upon his power. Partly this was a product of his intense demoralisation at the collapse of his diplomatic efforts to stave off war with Germany. Partly also it was a necessity of the rational waging of war. A series of regulatory forces emerged. Among the army generals the victims of repression were restored to command and won vital elements of independence from Stalin's disastrous tactical preconceptions. The moral unity of the Soviet people, shattered by a decade of witch-hunts, was refocused away from the themes of 'class' hatred and division towards national symbols of independence and liberty. Stalin himself played a part in this process, which gave voice to both progressive and reactionary expressions. Side by side with a revived Russian militarism, with bitter hatred of the whole German nation, new cultural impulses voiced the desire to reconstruct the civil and voluntary institutions of family and community now being shredded by total war. Controls upon popular culture were relaxed, and Stalin's personality cult was considerably reduced. These changes made it possible for the Soviet people to turn defeat into victory. Suffering dreadful casualties, they took on and destroyed nine-tenths of the Nazi armed forces. Without their sacrifice, few of us would be alive today. In the later stages of the war, however, while the Red Army rolled towards Berlin, the civil stirrings described above were stamped out[20]. Once Stalin could again identify himself with victory, he was able to dislodge from public life the forces which had achieved it. After the victory of 1945 many generals were retired. While the 'cold war' began to take shape in the West, new thinking in the East about international cooperation and the relaxation of internal controls was crushed by new purges, and Stalin's cult reached new extremes.

In the early post-war years Stalin's authority, based in the Stalinist system of government, was sufficient to return Soviet society to its pre-war mould and to refreeze its patterns of human and resource mobilisation. However it is clear, in spite of this, that dormant forces existed which were ready to seek a return to legality and moderation; they had been greatly strengthened by the experience of the Patriotic War, and also by the harsh and arbitrary clumsiness of post-war reconstruction[21]. As Soviet society in some respects matured Stalinism lost its dynamic, mobilising, world-transforming qualities; at the same time the moderate alternative represented weakly and temporarily by Kirov in the early 1930s was much stronger now. Thus with Stalin's death and the unravelling of the personalities of submissiveness and dependence, the challenge to the authoritarian system rapidly appeared.

After Stalin

When Khrushchev denounced Stalin's crimes to the closed session of the Twentieth CPSU Congress in 1956, the second phase of Soviet history drew to a close. In the third phase (which is still current) the institutions of terror and of personal authority did not disappear but were subordinated to law and bureaucratic regulation. The possibility of a return to the Stalinist terror has been greatly eroded, although the erosion has not proceeded evenly; a reversal cannot be ruled out, but would certainly require a major political upheaval. The main tensions in Soviet society have shifted back to the possibility of a thorough democratisation, and the need to develop elements of pluralism and community. Such developments have a far stronger basis today than in the 1920s, in the essential productive and strategic gains won by the Soviet people for themselves and for the world in the course of their society's socialist transformation. Still, the major centralising, bureaucratic forces of the Stalinist political system remain intact, and retain their links with the mass of the population through participatory institutions at a local and shop floor level. This is why democratisation does not just mean abolishing obstacles within the state, but developing civil society as well. □

19. Roy Medvedev, *op. cit.*, pp. 446-464.

20. See Alexander Werth, *Russia at War*, London 1964.

21. This was clearly expressed in the themes of Khrushchev's special report to the Twentieth Congress, as in the same Congress's attention to remedying the problems of Soviet agriculture, neglected since the war.

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The Local State

Reuben Falber

Paul Corrigan's article 'The Local State; the Struggle for Democracy' (MT July) raises a subject much neglected by Marxists—the role of local government in the state apparatus and conflicts within it. It was timely coming a few weeks before Michael Hesseltine announced the Thatcher government's intention to make cuts which besides undermining essential social services, will make inroads into local democracy, turning elected councillors into little more than central government agents for making savings at the expense of those they represent.

By taking 1962 as the turning point for the restructuring of the state Paul gets the reorganisation of local government out of its historical development and perspective. He also narrows down monopoly capitalism's interest in reorganisation, underestimates the labour movement's long record and experience of struggle in this field and does less than justice to the Communist Party's policies for local government reform.

In common with the rest of the state apparatus the development of local government is bound up with the needs of capitalism and the relationships and conflicts between classes. During the nineteenth century the bourgeoisie in industrial towns and cities sought to win control of municipal affairs in order to establish at public expense sanitation, health, education and other services required to develop industry. Motivated by a combination of self-interest, civic pride and political ambition (eg Joseph Chamberlain in Birmingham) and aided at times by socially conscious reformers, they ousted the coteries of petty minded, parsimonious, inefficient and often avaricious tradesmen, property-owners and, in a few cases, landed gentry who controlled the municipalities in cities with rapidly growing wealth and population. In *Victorian Cities* Professor Asa Briggs gives a fascinating account of this process in some of the biggest English cities.

We welcome Discussion contributions on articles appearing in the journal

The birth of modern local government

A series of Acts in the latter years of the century created the county, borough and district councils. Election, albeit on a franchise limited to ratepayers, gave them an appearance of democratic respectability. Control however remained firmly in the hands of Whitehall. There was to be no letting up of the process of centralising the capitalist state. Councils were limited to functions specified by Parliament and the doctrine of *ultra vires* was used against any who overstepped their legal powers. A watchdog, the District Auditor, closely scrutinised their accounts to ensure money was not spent for purposes not permitted by parliament and a number of methods were adopted to maintain financial control, including the requirement to secure ministry approval for ventures involving capital expenditure, ie, school, house and other building. Councils were very much at the mercy of the 'free market'. Land required for social development was bought or leased at market prices.

In some ruling class circles there was apprehension that 'local autonomy' might get out of hand. During the course of the battle to establish the London County Council in the 1880s fears were expressed that it would 'become more powerful than any prime minister and some monarchs' and that it would develop into 'a popular and democratic community with enormous powers of taxing the richer classes, a gigantic seat of intense agitation, a mighty lever and fulcrum for popular force'. Alas these fears were exaggerated. Unlike other county councils the London County Council was not given even formal powers over the police, this remained firmly in the hands of the Home Office. The City of London with its enormous rateable values was excluded from the new county. Sidney Webb observed it had been 'born in chains'.

The constraints placed on the council were not unconnected with working class developments in London. The great dock strike aroused widespread public sympathy, the unorganised were joining trade unions and there were massive unemployed demonstrations culminating in 'Bloody Sunday' when an unemployed marcher was killed by a mounted police charge. In these struggles small groups of socialists influenced by the ideas of Marx played a prominent part.

A vehicle for social improvement

The young and still politically weak labour movement soon realised the new councils provided possibilities for winning some improvements in working class conditions. In her diaries Beatrice Webb described the activities of the Fabians in London municipal affairs. Later the ILP began to secure representation on local councils, boards of guardians and school boards using elections and office to assist the unemployed, provide school meals for the children of the poor and secure improvements in housing.

Revolutionaries while rejecting reformist ideas summed up in Fabian 'gas and water socialism' also recognised the importance of local struggles as was demonstrated in the recent article by Stuart McIntyre in *Marxism Today*, 'Little Moscows'. In later years there were the big rent struggles in which Communists took a leading part.

The resolution on electoral work adopted by the 27th Congress of the Communist Party in 1961 called for greater efforts to win Communist representation on the councils as part of the fight to resist the Tory government's use of the 'councils as the instrument for attacks on the social services and raising rents'. It went on to accuse the Tories of undermining local democracy and said 'it is essential for our branches to undertake more continuous and constant activity on . . . local questions'.

While progressive elements in the labour movement have fought for an extension of local services and structural and financial reform in order to strengthen democracy, central governments, both Conservative and Labour, have taken important services away from the councils. This has been done ruthlessly when councils have used their powers to help workers. In 1929 the administration of the Poor Law was taken from borough councils and eventually taken over entirely by the government and placed under the Unemployment Assistance Board.

While the trend has been to limit council powers taking away services, from time to time councils have been given extra powers and legislation has expanded their role in major spheres. If central government has not succumbed to the temptation to take education, the largest single item of council expenditure, under its wing, might not the reason be a preference for such a large sum being carried by rates—a tax which bears more heavily on people with lower incomes, rather than on the central exchequer?

Local government—big business

It is not surprising that capitalism should keep a watchful eye on local government. The days of 'parish pump' policies are long past. Council spending in 1978/9 exceeded £18bn, about one-third of the total public

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sector expenditure. Its total debt was over £30bn, and annual interest charges well over £3bn. Loan raising and debt charges are an important part of the business, and of course profits, of discount houses, merchant banks and other financial institutions. Council contracts provide a massive market for sections of industry. Large construction companies like Wimpey, Laing and Taylor, and Woodrow owe a substantial part of their profits to councils' contracts.

The redevelopment of city centres, notably the blitzed cities, was carried out by councils in partnership with property companies, a situation forced on councils by their limited access to funds. The notorious Centre Point was made possible by a deal between the LCC and Oldham Estates, a company operated by Henry Hyams.

Oliver Marriot in the *Property Boom* and Peter Ambrose and Bob Colenutt in *The Property Machine* describe the deals and partnerships between councils and property companies which made overnight fortunes for the developers, despoiled large parts of cities, turning their centres into areas of chaos during the day and deserts in the evening, pushing industry outwards, reducing the number of available jobs, destroying amenity, pushing up the price of land to levels where building houses and flats became economically impossible and bankrupting small shopkeepers and businessmen unable to pay the inflated rents demanded.

As the scale of capitalism's operations grew local government structure corresponded less and less with its needs. At the same time the programmes for social advance campaigned for by the labour movement and other democratic forces were also ceasing to be congruent with the size of councils and their resources. The wartime Scott, Barlow and Uthwatt reports demonstrated convincingly that planning for housing, transport industry and many important local services required local government reorganisation.

The patchwork quilt of English local government with counties, varying from Rutland with 29,000 population to Lancashire with 2,428,000 population and 1,210 boroughs and district councils, with populations running from below 5,000 up to Birmingham with over a million, was archaic, chaotic and not notable for democracy. It was a product of the age of the horse and cart and the horse bus, unsuitable for the era of the motorcar and unfitted to the requirements of modern social and public services.

The inability of councils to grapple with their problems gave Whitehall the excuse for taking away from them hospitals, gas and electricity enterprises and placing services under the ad hoc regional bodies, not under any form of democratic control.

Reorganisation could no longer be avoided. Committees, commissions and White Papers proliferated. Reports were issued, speedily forgotten and gathered dust on shelves in Whitehall. But the issue would not lie down and the first major change came with the report of the Herbert Commission on Local Government in Greater London, 1957-60. The Commission did not share Paul Corrigan's difficulty in noting the difference between the Communist Party's policy and proposals advanced by others. It said 'the views of the London District of the Communist Party were ably presented and argued. The resemblance between the views of the Communist Party and those of the London Municipal Society (the Tory municipal organisation in the LCC area) is, however, only superficial because the Communist Party would like to see the effective power in the borough further split up amongst a number of smaller groups in each borough.'

Communist policy for reform

Communist policy for local government reorganisation stressed the connection between structure and finance (the replacement of rating by a local income tax and an extension of democracy in local government). Its evidence presented in 1966 to the Maude Commission on local government proposed no reduction in the number of councillors; election by proportional representation; the abolition of aldermen; teachers and other local government employees to have the same right as other citizens to be elected to councils; council and council committee meetings to be held in the evenings to make it easier for workers to serve; the co-option of non-councillors to committee, ie, parents and teachers on education committees, tenants associations and building unions on housing committees; pensioners on health and welfare committees; elected ward committees to meet regularly with ward councillors; urban parish councils in towns; the right of citizens to be informed of any new development or project likely to affect their homes or living conditions.

We recognised the need for larger units as part of a total process of reforming local government. Smaller units are not necessarily more democratic or acceptable to the people and their needs. The Herbert Commission recommended that education in Greater London should be controlled by each of the new borough councils. This meant the break-up of the London County Council's system, which had gone further than most other authorities in the development of comprehensive education. Immediately there was opposition. Over 80,000 people attended meetings protesting against the breakup of the London education service. The Macmillan government was compelled to retreat and the Inner London Education Authority was established to cover the old LCC and take over its education functions within the old LCC area. Today the Tory controlled Wandsworth Borough Council is campaigning for control of the schools within its area, not to develop comprehensive education still further but to restore the grammar schools. It uses the classical arguments, the ILEA is 'too big' and 'bureaucratic'. Whatever ILEA's sins it gives children of working class families a better deal than they can expect from the present Wandsworth council.

The Herbert Commission also proposed the break up of the LCC Housing Department. This, too, was deferred. Only now under the Tory GLC is it going ahead. Overcrowded families, the homeless and squatters will have even greater difficulty in finding a place to live and it will be the inner London boroughs with the worst housing and social conditions, the largest number of deprived families, who will suffer the most from the break up of the large scale London housing department.

Structures and struggle

If councillors find the new structures make the fight more difficult might this not be due to the way they fight? 'Poplarism' would never have become inscribed on the roll of great working class victories if George Lansbury and their colleagues had taken on the government of the day by themselves. They won because they had the people's support and involved them in the struggles, marching at their head to the High Court and spending six weeks in prison while the London labour movement held huge demonstrations outside the prison gates.

The McKinsey style management is not inevitable. Councillors who are determined to do their job as elected representatives can decide the forms of management most suited to the needs of the services in their district and to assist the electorate in influencing decisions.

Local democracy faces its greatest danger. It can survive only by mass struggle. The problem is not structures but the reluctance of councillors, influenced by social democracy, to challenge Whitehall and encourage and initiate extra-parliamentary and extra-council chamber struggle.

The Thatcher government is driving ruthlessly ahead with plans to cut spending and hand over to big business anything which can be a source of profit to it. It is a leap back into the past, revanchism aimed at wresting social territory won by the working class and democratic forces through years of struggle. The defeat of these aims is central to the struggle for democracy. The working class with its long and fruitful experience of struggle in this arena can, if it uses all the weapons at its disposal, win the battle.

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The Working Class and the Broad Democratic Alliance

Gaby Charing

'The struggle for women's liberation is a central political question for the working class. The emancipation of women is an important goal in itself. In addition, unless women are involved in the overall struggle for socialism, and men in the struggle to resolve the specific problems of women, the possibilities of developing working class unity and the broad democratic alliance will be greatly diminished. Thus the fight for women's liberation is an integral part of the struggle for socialism and needs to be taken up by the whole labour movement.'

(*British Road to Socialism*, page 29)

Feminists will have been saddened and dismayed by Comrade Mick Costello's article on 'The Working Class and the Broad Democratic Alliance' (MT June 1979). Here, in a major article, the Party's industrial organiser systematically ignores the Party's commitment in the *British Road to Socialism* to the aims of the Women's Liberation Movement. Speaking throughout of 'women's rights', he studiously avoids even a reference to the goal of liberation. The omission is clearly not accidental and reflects a view of women's oppression which must cause great concern to those who are trying to give concrete expression to Party policy on women.

The leading role of the working class in the broad democratic alliance is fundamental to the strategy of the *British Road to Socialism*. But no analysis of it can be adequate which does not address the question of women in all its complexity. I suggest that Comrade Costello's equivocation on this issue has a serious and damaging effect on his analysis of the broad democratic alliance and the leading role of the working class within it. In a short note it is possible only to touch on a number of points:

1 Democracy

'The adoption of policies that see democracy as a matter of fundamental political principle rather than merely of tactics or even strategy is a major step forward,' wrote Robert Gray in an article, 'The State and Democratic Strategy' (MT October 1978, page 311).

There is widespread suspicion that the Party's concern with democracy is a matter of expedience rather than principle. As important as our commitment to a plurality of political parties under socialism is how we are seen to conceive of democracy inside the broad democratic alliance.

What are we to make of Comrade Costello's reference to 'pressure groups whose contribution is decided by their own image of reality'? For him the differences in the component parts of the alliance are contained in their 'as yet, limited aims and the different *subjective* positions taken up by them'. To this counterpose the Party's *objective* understanding of the reality of class relations under capitalism.

The language of 'subjective' and 'objective' suggests that 'we' know better, that 'we' have the path mapped out for 'them'. Is this really democracy? It seems democracy is a frightening thing — it leads to the unexpected, to things that we cannot control. For women such an attitude means that the validity of our own experience is yet again downgraded and even denied.

Comrade Costello speaks of 'the crucial need for working class leadership in all the *struggles* of the oppressed'. Feminists must part company with him if he means that the organisations of the working class can, let alone must, lead the struggle against women's oppression. The *British Road to Socialism* for this very reason emphasises the need for an autonomous women's movement.

2 Reformism

Comrade Costello is rightly concerned about the danger of reformist interpretation of the *British Road to Socialism*. Indeed, the charge of reformism is frequently levelled against the BRS by socialists outside the Party. This allegation has been well answered by Betty Matthews ('Notes on Democratic Struggle in the Transition to Socialism', MT March 1978), who points to the revolutionary *aims* of the Party's strategy, to our understanding of the class nature of the state and to our emphasis on mass involvement in democratic struggle. I would add this: it is a fundamental characteristic of reformism that it glosses over contradictions among the working class. We, as Communists, are committed as a principle to support the struggles of oppressed groups, even when this involves challenging those sections of the working class on whose organised strength we most rely.

Of these contradictions among the working class none are so fundamental and enduring as those which perpetuate the subordination of women. The BRS recognises that 'support for the basic demands of the Women's Liberation Movement and of the Working Women's Charter and the overcoming of sexism — the defence of male privilege — are essential parts of the struggle to build the broad democratic alliance'. Surely we must realise that in the long term building the unity of the working class and the broad democratic alliance involves grappling with and overcoming the structures of privilege and hierarchy within the working class which are the true material basis of reformism. That is what politics is all about. Of these contradictions, Comrade Costello has not one word to say.

3 Women and Class

Comrade Costello believes women's oppression can be explained purely in class terms and that its basis is ideological. Feminists believe that women's oppression has a material basis. It has its origins not in relations of capitalist exploitation, but in the sexual division of labour within the family.

Women's subordination to men is as old as class society itself. No Marxist has ever succeeded in satisfactorily deriving women's oppression solely from class relations in either capitalist or pre-capitalist society. Feminists have given the name patriarchy (literally: the rule of the father) to the complex of ideological and material forces in society that perpetuate women's oppression. Any account of the role of the working class in the struggle for socialism must address the fact that one half of the working class is also struggling against patriarchy.

Historically, since women's exclusion in the early nineteenth century from large areas of production and the development of the highly ideological notion of the 'family wage', the fundamental definition of women's role has been as housewife, *not* as waged worker. Whether or not we also work outside the home, all women are expected to perform domestic labour within the home and *to do so in conditions of economic, legal and personal dependence on men*. This domestic dependence is reinforced constantly by the state. The ways in which this is done and the state's reasons for doing so, as well as the implications for women's struggles and organisation, are major concerns of the women's movement at the present time.

The sexual division of labour in the family extends into the workforce itself, a fact not seen by Engels. Women in waged work do 'women's work'. We do so in the familiar conditions, recognised by Cde Costello, of low pay, low status, part-time work, lack of job security. Women's participation in the workforce is enormous — we make up 40 per cent of it — and we are crucial. This is the fundamental contradiction of women's role: we are a major part of the workforce, yet the very conditions of our participation in it are determined *outside* the relations of waged

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labour. This makes for the distinctive nature of women's *exploitation* under capitalism. It raises very specific questions for the trade union movement which desperately need taking up.

4 The trade union movement and female waged labour

It is customary to dwell on the well-known obstacles to the organisation and active participation of women workers in trade unions. What is less often seen is the variety and breadth of women's interests as trade unionists — the breadth for women of the term 'class struggle'. It is this that the Communist Party and the trade union movement need now to acknowledge, having failed to do so in the past. The daily struggle over wages and conditions means, intrinsically, for women such issues as hours of work, the length of the working week, maternity leave, creche and nursery facilities. The economic crisis is biting especially among women (women in and out of work are the poorest sections of the community). New technology will destroy whole areas of women's employment. The trade union movement is showing signs of waking up to these issues in its defence of jobs.

It is regrettable therefore that Cde Costello reacts so sharply (and without naming them) against socialist feminists who have had the temerity to suggest that any trade union policy (be it on incomes policy or the length of the working week) must answer to the needs of women workers. (See 'Work to Rule: Wages and the Family', by Beatrix Campbell and Val Charlton, *Red Rag*).

Conflicts of interest *do* exist. To take just one example: the celebrated struggle against dilution of labour in the engineering industry during World War One was a struggle against women workers. These contradictions must be recognised and resolved through strategies which transcend them.

That women's interests are often ignored goes without saying. The Clegg Commission uses arbitrary assumptions and fifth-rate arguments to justify continuing women's position as the lowest paid workers. Indeed it acts to reinforce this position. That it was likely to do so was widely recognised from the moment that it was set up. Yet the trade union movement bound itself in advance to accept the report's conclusions. Why? Can women believe the trade union movement is really committed to ending low pay? What answers has the Left got now on this issue? The political problem for the Party and for the women's movement is to establish to what extent the trade union movement can be expected to confront the special problems of women workers.

Comrade Costello is absolutely correct to stress the limitations as well as the breadth of the trade unions' role and the indispensable role of the Party.

It is the responsibility of the Party, if it is serious about its role as a revolutionary organisation championing the interests of the whole of the working class, to take up the issue of women at every level in the working class movement. The women's movement even at the present time contains many active trade union militants. Every Party feminist must hope and work for there to be many more. Feminism is still seen in some Party quarters as in some way inimical to working class organisation. The Party needs building and strengthening in every area and women need to be involved in building the Party at every level — above all in the branches, *including* the workplace branches.

The best statement I know on these issues was made more than 60 years ago by a man, the greatest Marxist ever to write in the English language. In 1915 James Connolly wrote:-

> 'None so fitted to break the chains as they who wear them, none so well equipped to decide what is a fetter. In its march towards freedom, the working class of Ireland must cheer on the efforts of those women who, feeling in their souls and bodies the fetters of the ages, have arisen to strike them off, and cheer all the louder if in its hatred of thraldom and passion for freedom the women's army forges ahead of the militant army of Labour.
>
> But whosoever carries the outworks of the citadel of oppression, the working class alone can raze it to the ground.'
>
> ('Woman' in *The Re-Conquest of Ireland*)

Reviews

PASSIVE REVOLUTION. POLITICS AND THE CZECHOSLOVAK WORKING CLASS, 1945-8

Jon Bloomfield

Allison & Busby 1979. 290 pp.
Hardback £10.00. Paperback £3.95

The period covered by Jon Bloomfield has in the past been largely neglected or distorted — in the West by cold war attitudes, in the East by Stalinist or neo-Stalinist treatment. Sadly, the Czechoslovak historians who were attempting a new Marxist analysis in the 1960s have been silenced. We have here, then, the first thoroughly researched account in English based on original sources. And there is much that is relevant to strategies for socialism in advanced capitalist countries, and also to an understanding of some aspects of 'existing socialism'.

The argument running through the book is that 'the working class was largely a willing accomplice to the revolution, not its driving force,' and 'the decisive influence came from above and abroad'.

The Communist Party emerged from the experience of Munich and the resistance as the dominant party of the working class. There were, however, two views about the strategy to be adopted on liberation. The Moscow-based leadership, its hand strengthened by the victorious advance of the Soviet armies, followed Stalin's line for postwar Europe by negotiating an alliance with the 'national' anti-fascist bourgeoisie to carry through a 'national and democratic revolution'. This defensive Popular Front tactic, as Bloomfield defines it, contrasted with the demands coming from the domestic resistance movement that now, with fascism on the brink of defeat, a more offensive strategy for socialism should be pursued.

The conflict can be seen in the case of nationalisation. Originally the coalition programme allowed only for taking over the property of enemies and collaborators (in fact, the major industrial concerns), but in response to persistent demands from the workers the measures were soon extended. In arguing for this the Communist Party spoke in national rather than socialist terms, showing that 'nationalism rather than anti-capitalism was the impulse behind this policy. The class character of the issue was blurred.'

The problem posed here is, of course, being faced by other parties today, and Bloomfield rightly states that 'the balance between retaining maximum unity and encouraging the most advanced forces to press ahead always needs fine judgement'. Whether or not the reader agrees that the Czechoslovak Communist Party erred on the side of caution because, lacking any other theory than the Stalinist, it placed the interests of Soviet policy first, the book provides matter for debate. But some considerations have, I think, been overlooked. For in a country just liberated from the national humiliation of occupation, a country which, moreover, had experienced only twenty years of national independence, the battle for the hearts and minds of the people still had to be fought out with the 'national' bourgeoisie. With a large section of the capitalist class

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isolated by their collaboration with the Germans, measures to put industry into the hands of the people and to tackle the economic, moral and social crisis of the nation had an implicit class content which was understood by all concerned.

Socialism was the goal, but the contention here is that the tactics of the 'Popular Front' phase (lasting till mid-1947) bore no relation to the Party's vision of that goal. The 'Czechoslovak road to socialism' of that period is described as a Stalinist tactic, merely a different road to Soviet-type one-party socialism. True, many Communists saw it in that way, which made their obedient response to the 1947-8 switch in Soviet policy all the easier. Nevertheless, things were not so clear cut, there were those who genuinely believed that the road could lead to a democratic socialism of a new, Czechoslovak kind, but their gropings were cut short by the worsening international situation and the 'great February victory' when the 'socialist' phase of the revolution was carried through.

By then the Communist Party was able to rely on well-controlled mass support for a solution of the power crisis by constitutional means from above. A centralised trade union movement had brought the spontaneous works councils of the early days under its control, and the mass organisations in general were becoming 'the passive beneficiaries of party policy', ie 'transmission belts' on the Stalinist model. In this sense the revolution could, at this stage, be termed passive. Moreover, Bloomfield's argument that the seeds of the monolithic system after 1948 were sown by this approach to working class organisation deserves serious study.

In those first three years, however, the process was still under way. There was a vast amount of independent activity, initiative and discussion in which the working class were certainly more than 'willing accomplices'; at the same time the alliance with the farmers and petit bourgeoisie, so rudely broken after 1948, was being strengthened. Although in 1968 there was a tendency to idealise the period, it contained much of value in the search for a democratic socialist order, as, in a more developed but still unfinished form, is the case with the experience of 1968.

Marian Sling

THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF THE WELFARE STATE

Ian Gough

Macmillan 1979. 196pp. Paperback £3.95

The welfare state is a contradictory phenomenon, it simultaneously tends to enhance social welfare by meeting real needs of the working class, while at the same time it represses and controls those same people in order to adapt them to the requirements of the capitalist economy. The source of this contradiction is that the forms and goals of social policy are not subject to direct capitalist control but are determined by class struggle; yet they are necessary to the reproduction of the capitalist mode of production and subject to the structural constraints imposed by the capitalist economy. The consequence of the contradiction is that the welfare state itself becomes the source of further crises within capitalism. This contradiction, which makes the study of the state both interesting and difficult, is the focus of Gough's book.

The aim of the book is to provide an analysis of the welfare state under capitalism using the theory and methods of Marxist political economy. After an introduction which considers the ideological role of the term 'welfare state', Gough provides a short introduction to Marxist political economy and a review of the role of the state under capitalism. He then looks at the origins of social policy and the post-war growth of social expenditure across the advanced capitalist world; followed by an examination of the connection of the welfare state to the capitalist economy and to the current crisis. There is a political postscript, plus four technical appendices, three on Marxist theory of the state and one on the marketed and non-marketed sectors. The series in which the book is published is primarily addressed to practitioners in and students of social work and the social services. This is reflected in the style of writing chosen and the structure of the argument, which may seem discursive to Marxist economists, and also the tendency to leave some of the theory implicit. This is unfortunate since central to any explanation of the topics he covers are a series of theoretical judgments on such highly controversial areas as the state, crisis, unproductive labour, etc. Although Gough's position has changed somewhat from that taken in some earlier work, no doubt his critics will obtain more fraternal amusement from writing impassioned attacks on the line he has taken here. But while there do seem to be serious questions about his treatment of some of these issues, this does not detract from the fact that this is a serious and useful book which draws together a range of politically important material on a difficult subject within a fairly coherent Marxist structure.

One strength of the book is that it extends the treatment of the crisis in the state from being merely a fiscal crisis to being a production crisis. State organisation of social services has two major roles for capital. It is a response to a realisation problem, providing markets for private firms either directly through state purchase or indirectly through transfer payments which enable the working class to purchase commodities from capital. At this level (of transfer of the surplus), there is a fiscal crisis associated with complaints about the burden of state expenditure and taxation. But more importantly, the state influences the production of surplus directly, by socialising the reproduction of the workforce and thus influencing the value of labour power. Since the state supplies a large range of necessities, either produced as commodities as in housing and the nationalised industries, or as use values, in the case of health and education, the labour process in the state sector is an important determinant of the value of labour power, and thus the mass of surplus value. But the production is neither under direct capitalist control, nor in many cases is it even commodity production subject to the law of value. With the extension of state organisation of the reproduction of labour power, one source of the expansion of surplus value, the reduction of the value of labour power by cutting the abstract labour time required for the production of necessities, is increasingly removed from capitalist relations of production. Lack of control over the labour process in the state sector then becomes a major obstacle to the reduction of the value of labour power and the expansion of surplus value. Capital can only attempt to enforce the necessary restructuring through the political process, where it faces substantial opposition, from workers in the state sector.

Although Gough does not present the argument in the form given above, he provides much material central to an understanding of the role that capital and class struggle play in determining the character of state production. That understanding is an essential ingredient in the fight to stop capitalist rationality removing the last vestiges of a concern for welfare from the 'welfare state'.

Ron Smith

We would particularly like to acknowledge the contribution of Paul Marginson, David Triesman, Gill Jacobs, Anna Aubrey, Peter Hammarling, Paul Webster, Mike Jones, Helen Hewland, Jon Chadwick, and Colin Roberts amongst others, in helping to make this new-style *Marxism Today* possible. *Ed.*

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NOTES

Ruskin History Workshop 13:
'People's History and Socialist Theory'
Nov 30-Dec 2, 1979. Ruskin Hall,
Headington, Oxford.

Raphael Samuel writes: History is perhaps the one field in which Marxist work in Britain has shown a continuous, and many-sided, if often contradictory growth. Its strength lies as much outside the universities as inside.

The Ruskin History Workshop — which extends fraternal greetings to readers of *Marxism Today* — will be an occasion to take stock of the very different intellectual and political forces which have shaped the making of socialist historical work in the past 100 years; it will try to account for the different directions taken by work within different national traditions (a feature of the Workshop will be the participation of our close comrades from different countries in Europe); and it will try to set out the tasks to be accomplished — and the problematics which have arisen — in the wide variety of fields where Marxism is a growing force: Peasant Studies, Cultural Studies, for instance, as well as such more obvious fields as trade union and feminist history. The Workshop will be an occasion to debate some of the issues which have arisen around the publication of E P Thompson's *Poverty of Theory;* and it will also discuss the rather longer-standing question of how history can be used as a weapon in class struggle. Finally the Workshop aims to give practical help to people working in local and community-based projects, with sessions on oral history, archives and sources, factory history, and (with the aid of Eddie and Ruth Frow) collecting labour history libraries. In all, participants have a choice of two of thirteen one day sessions, together with three plenary sessions. 'Position papers' will be circulated a month beforehand. The programme and tickets (£3 for the week-end plus £2 for position papers) are obtainable from Ruskin History Workshop Collective, Walton Street, Oxford. Free sleeping floor accommodation is offered to those who are prepared to rough it, and there are creche facilities.

Steve Iliffe writes: Opposition to the Tory government's cutback in spending on the NHS has begun to serve as a focus for reaction against its policies amongst a wide spectrum of the population. At the community level, the closure of local facilities is being resisted with some degree of success. Within the health service itself, there are welcome signs that staff from different sectors and levels are recognising the need for a common commitment to the extension and development of existing facilities. The TUC has overwhelmingly demonstrated its concern about the threat of redundancies in the health service, and with the consequences these will have for the provision of adequate health care available to all sections of the population.

Opposition to Tory cuts is not in itself, sufficient. The recent Royal Commission revealed some of the inadequacies of the NHS as it existed before the present onslaught. To be successful, a campaign to defend the NHS must combine immediate demands with a clear vision of what kind of health service we want; such a campaign must find ways of integrating the struggles of all those who work to expand and democratise the NHS.

To this end, the Communist Party is convening a national aggregate conference for Communist health workers, labour movement and community activists. Speakers will include Dr M Rapoport, Dr R Wilson, Irene Swan, and Steve Iliffe, who will assess Tory policy on health, the kind of health service we should be fighting for, and what the CP's strategy should be. The conference will take place on Saturday 20 October, from 11 am to 4.30 pm at the Polytechnic of Central London (Regent St Building). Admission is by CP / YCL card only — creche facilities will be available.

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9.30 – 10.30 am.	Registration
10.30 prompt	Opening Address in Support of Rudolf Bahro – *Zhores Medvedev*
11.30	The State in Late Capitalism: Can the state be gradually transformed? Has the essence of the state changed? *Tom Litterick – Ernest Mandel – John Saville*
1.30	Lunch
3.00	Workshops 1) New Theories of the State *(Convenor – Michael Cox)* 2) Economic & Political Irrationality in the USSR *(Convenor – Sandy Smith)* 3) Gramsci & Eurocommunism *(Convenor – Quintin Hoare)* 4) Theories of the Present Crisis *(Convenors – Paul Walton & Andrew Gamble)*
5.30	Dinner
7.00 prompt	The Relevance of Leninism Today: Did Lenin make the crucial undemocratic errors which led to Stalinism? *Monty Johnstone – Rudi Dutschke – Chris Harman*
10.00 pm.	Close

SATURDAY OCT. 13

10.00 am. prompt	Is Market Socialism Possible or Necessary: Is a market required in the next stage in Eastern Europe or in the West, or is non-market socialism the only form of alternative socialist society? *Wlodzimierz Brus & Hillel Ticktin*
1.00	Lunch
2.30	Workshops *(As on Friday)*
5.30	Dinner
7.00	The Lessons & Consequences of Chile: Is a new form of organisation required? Is Eurocommunism viable? *Andre Gundar Frank – Ernesto Laclau – Michel Raptis*
10.00 pm.	Close

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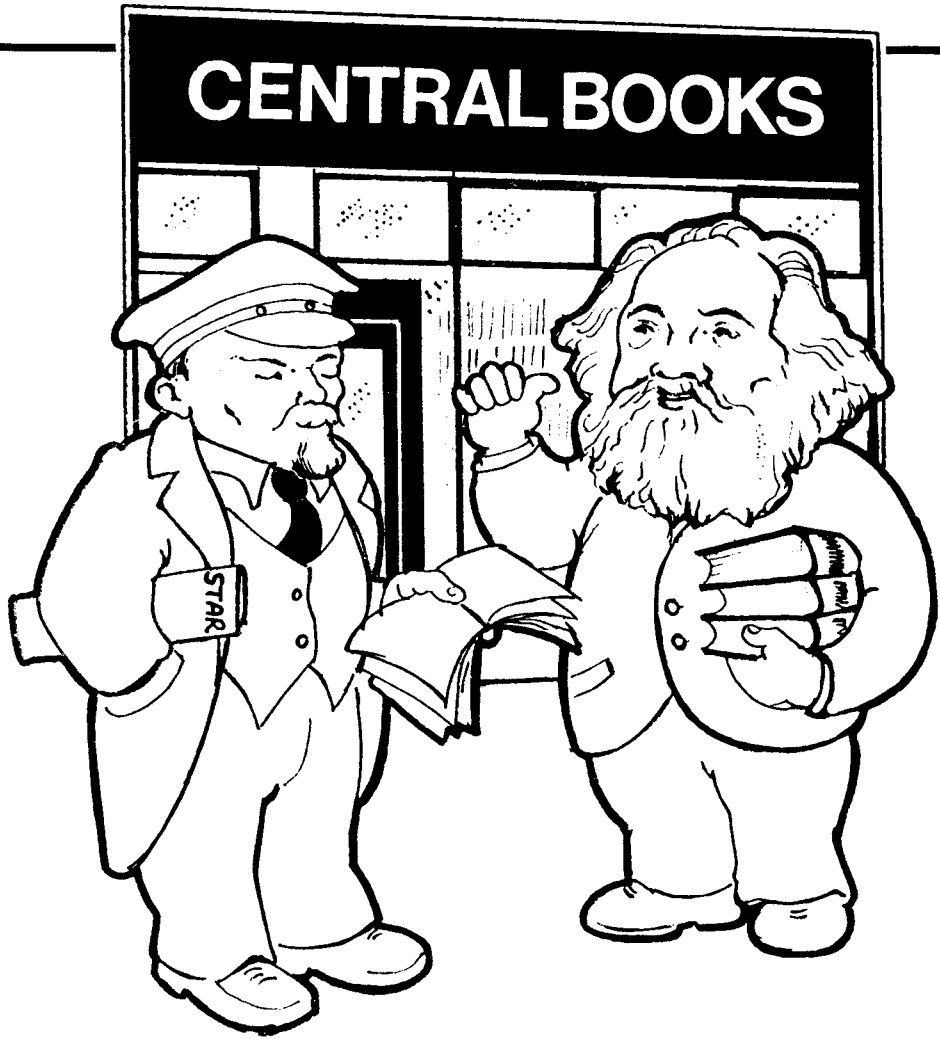

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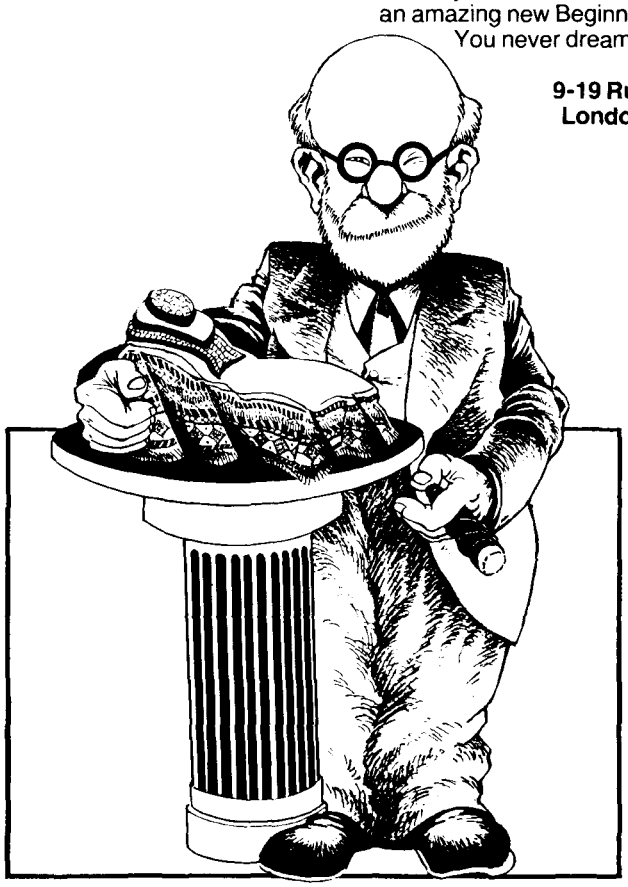

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